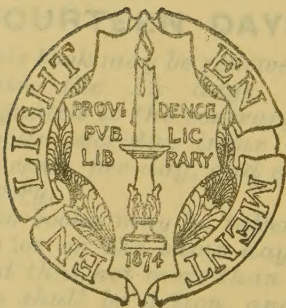


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THE SPINDLE-SIDE  
OF  
SCOTTISH SONG









*Lady Nairne and her Son.  
From a painting in Gask House by Sir John Watson.*



THE SPINDLE-SIDE  
OF  
SCOTTISH SONG

BY  
JESSIE P. FINDLAY



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*DEDICATED*  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
MY MOTHER



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# THE SPINDLE-SIDE OF SCOTTISH SONG

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

SONG is the earliest and most picturesque form of literature, and sound, it is needless to say, was born before articulate language was framed to express its meaning and purpose. Words, indeed, are at the best merely a blundering effort to picture the elusive visions of the soul and to interpret the meaning of primal Nature; and it is from man's attempt to embody these in the tangible form of harmonious language that the evolution of song has been achieved. For song is that lyric impulse which has its root in the immortal faculty of imagination, and it finds its natural and highest expression in the measured cadences of a beautiful human voice.

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It is one of the most natural instincts of humanity to find figures of speech wherewith to express sound—the wind *wails*, the sea *moans*, the streamlet *laughs* as it hurries through the glen. We say, too, that the heart *beats* because it keeps measured and, therefore, rhythmical time, and ere long we divine an emotional meaning in those heart-beats which, being interpreted for us by the poets, reveals to us the significance and the purpose of life.

But even the poets have not always command over the freakish tendency of sound ; and, juggle they ever so wisely with words, the result is frequently unintelligible and chaotic. In Scottish song, for example, one is sometimes startled and puzzled by a jingle of uncouth sounds occurring at the end of each stanza and known as the burden or “ owercome ” of the song. Extravagant though these sounds are, they yet possess a haunting property which it is difficult to define. Take, for instance, the oldest known example of the “ owercome,” which occurs in a ballad sung by Scottish maidens in derision of their English sisters who are mourning their dead on the Field of Bannockburn—

“ *Heuealowae ! Rumbylowae !* ”

Surely this is an enigma in sound !

“Waly, waly!” is another example of this struggle for expression through the faulty medium of speech; so, again, is the soothing “Baloo, baloo!” of the nurse’s lullaby; also “Aye, waukin’ oh!” which it takes a Scotch lass in love to understand; and the ridiculous yet suggestively finical refrain of the modern ballad, “The Cooper o’ Fife” —*Nickity, nackity, noo, noo, noo!*

But such tongue-tied cadences as these are at the best grotesque and disturbing, and the finest song is that which glides in satisfying smoothness and clarity along the channels of speech.

Scottish song, in spite of the rugged character of the Doric, is peculiarly rich in such perfect specimens; and the effusions of the songstresses of the nation are bright examples of combined delicacy and strength in the union of imagination and expression.

Curiously enough, the majority of those daughters of song are aristocrats or, at least, well-born ladies who, being endowed with a larger share than the average of that “touch of nature” which “makes the whole world kin,” have been inspired to create or to purify the songs of the people. In this respect the songstresses differ from the balladists

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of the nation who were "common minstrels" and whose very names are unknown.

The lives of the Scottish songstresses would have been admirable and, in some cases, distinguished, even without their crowning gift of song. Some of these ladies played no mean part in the history of their native land; and in following the course of their lives we shall find that the paths of national history and of popular song are parallel, that Scottish song cannot be dissociated from Scottish history, and that it is, in short, the crystallised essence of the national life and character.

Amid much that is diverse in the history of the Spindle-side of Scottish Song, one striking similarity emerges—the majority of the singers are emphatically women of one song, and this remains true in spite of the fact that several have written many other lyrics.

Lady Grisell Hume, whose personality is by far the most romantic of the group, is the first example of this; indeed, it is not going too far to aver that she has gained her niche in the temple of Fame by dint of one peerless line—

"Werena my heart licht, I would dee."



Jean Adam, the disputed author of "There's nae luck about the hoose," is another example; Mrs. Cockburn and Miss Jean Elliot are famous only for their versions of "The Flowers of the Forest"; and Susanna Blamire's lovely song, "Ye shall walk in silk attire," bids fair to obliterate from the memories of all except students of Scottish song the other lyrics of that gifted lady; Jean Glover is the author of only one song, "Ower the muir amang the heather," and all the world knows that Lady Ann Lindsay wrote the incomparable "Auld Robin Gray"; Mrs. John Hunter, the brilliant wife of the distinguished anatomist, wrote the song which is wedded to Haydn's exquisite melody, "My Mother bids me bind my hair"; Elizabeth Hamilton, author of the still popular Scottish tale, "The Cottagers of Glenburnie," wrote "My Ain Fireside"; Mrs. Grant of Carron is known as the author of "Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch," which found a spirited musical interpretation on the fiddle of Neil Gow, most famous of Scottish violinists; and Mrs. Grant of Laggan, whom Lord Cockburn approved as being "an excellent woman and not too blue," wrote a song called, "O where, tell me where, does my Highland Laddie dwell?" which,

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by a perverse fate, has been merged and lost in a parody still popular under the name of "The Blue Bells of Scotland"; the fervent Marion Paul Aird wrote some volumes of verses, but she is remembered only by her tender hymn, "Had I the wings of a dove"; Isobel Pagan—that lame and unamiable daughter of song—wrote "Ca' the yowes to the knowes"; and Mary Campbell, the friend of the song-loving Principal Shairp of St. Andrews, wrote both words and music of the stirring "March of the Cameron Men."

It is unlikely that Scotland shall ever again give birth to such characteristic representatives of native song as the group with which these pages deal, because the speech, the customs, and the habits of the Scots are gradually becoming merged in those of the British Empire.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SONGSTRESS IN EXILE: LADY GRISELL HUME

LADY GRISELL HUME was the eldest daughter of a numerous family. She was born at Red-braes Castle in Berwickshire on December 25, 1665. Her father, Sir Patrick Hume of Polwarth, afterwards Earl of Marchmont, was one of the "marked men" of Scotland during the turbulent reigns of Charles II. and James II., when the people were fighting for religious liberty and Presbyterianism.

Sir Patrick, being of the Covenanting faction, became seriously involved in the politico-religious struggle which culminated during the reign of Charles II.; and the life of his brave and talented daughter Grisell was spent amid that whirlwind of historic events which ushered in the Revolution.

Lady Grisell was endowed with a generous portion of the lyric spirit, but the times in which

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she lived were unfavourable to the cultivation of her gift.

One perfect specimen of song and a few beautiful fragments are all that have been preserved out of the lost manuscript-books of songs which she is known to have written during the exile of her family in Holland. This song, beginning

“ There was ance a may and she lo’ed na men ;  
She biggit her bonnie bouir doon in yon glen ;  
But now she cries, Dule and a-well-a-day !  
Come doon the green gait, and come here-away,”

is valuable chiefly for the unique, almost *gauche*, simplicity of its phraseology and for the faithful picture it presents of the Scottish rural life of a by-gone day. The first and the last verses suggest an older ballad, and one is tempted to conclude that an antique rhyme of Grisell’s childhood had made an indelible impression on her through the crooning voice, perhaps, of an old nurse. It was by no means an unusual thing for Scottish songstresses to build up a new ballad from the *débris* of an ancient one.

Undoubtedly this song owes its perennial charm to the quaintly courageous line which expresses the pervading sentiment of the whole poem, and

is repeated with clever effect at the end of some of the verses. This line, which may be regarded as the refrain, is the rueful yet defiant plaint of a strong woman's heart which has been braced and stung rather than broken by the pangs of slighted love—"Werena my heart licht, I wad dee!" The maiden sings:—

"His kin was for ane o' higher degree,  
Said, What wad he do wi' the like o' me?  
Albeit I was bonnie, I wasna for Johnie—  
And werena my heart licht, I wad dee!"

In a survey of the events in the life of Lady Grisell Hume we find ourselves following the track of Scottish history. The Pentland Rising took place when she was less than a year old, and, doubtless, when she was old enough to ask the question of the Children of the Ghetto—*What mean ye by these things?*—her father would tell her of the cruel sufferings of the oppressed Kirk for the cause of Christ and of the driven remnant who were thrust into "Haddo's hole" within St. Giles's Church in Edinburgh.

When Grisell was fourteen years old, Drumclog's desperate victory was won, and she must have heard the tale of that armed conventicle which met on



the green moorland on a June Sabbath morning to worship God ; of how the warning was given by the outpost that the enemy was upon them ; and of how slowly and calmly the old men, the women, and the children left the field and wended their way across the intervening morass into safety, their solemn chant of the Martyrs' Psalm swelling above Claverhouse's battle-cry of *No quarter !* and their gaze fixed on the banner *For Christ's Kirk and Covenant* that erelong waved in silent victory over a river of blood.

That year also Grisell would join the mourning over the disastrous defeat at Bothwell Bridge and grow wild with indignation at the tale of the prisoners marching into Edinburgh,—there to be penned, like sheep, in the fatal enclosure at Greyfriars' Churchyard, night and day, for five months under the inclement Scottish sky.

Stories of the perfidy of kings, the cunning of foes, the treachery of friends would constantly amaze Grisell's innocent youth. Nor were there wanting equally tragic tales of domestic life to startle her half-comprehending sense. Grisell, with her vivid interest in all romantic happenings, would find in the gossip of the country-side and of the

servants' hall food for her hungry imagination. She would hear the true tale of the *Sad Bride of Baldoon*—yet to be rendered immortal by Sir Walter Scott in the “Bride of Lammermoor”—and she would pity the sorrows of the Marchioness of Douglas as set forth in the new-made ballad of “Waly, waly!”

She would hear, too, of the tragic death of Archbishop Sharp on Magus Muir, and, doubtless, if “the new test” had been applied by any wandering band of Clavers's troopers to intrepid Grisell Hume, she would have roundly declared that violent death to be “no murder,” but a mere act of justice. Also she would listen to the story of how the soldiers' surly darling, Mons Meg, had burst when fired in honour of the Duke of York's visit to Edinburgh, and would note the whispered assurances that that was indeed an evil omen, while muttered quotations from Scripture hailed the advent of certain comets with “greit tails blazing” as a presage of disaster to the foes of the Covenant.

But other and happier influences would aid in moulding Grisell's character. She would witness the blithe penny bridals held under the great tree near the village of Polwarth-on-the-Green, and

would listen enraptured to the ballads sung by her father's russet-coated tenantry at many a rural gathering—the ballad, perhaps, of “Bessie Bell and Mary Grey,” or “The Wooing of Jenny and Jock,” or “The Bonny Earl.”

Thus it came about that, in spite of the stress of sterner events in her life, Grisell was gathering through the songs and customs of the people an accurate knowledge of their habits and traditions which, though to lie long dormant in her memory, was in due time to touch the hidden spring of poetry and set free the music of original song.

Sir Patrick Hume was an advocate of all innocent and mirthful pleasures, differing in this from the mass of the Covenanters. Hunting, dancing, and singing were the customary amusements of his household. He was but a young man when he became embroiled in his country's calamities and was of an optimistic temperament. Moreover, that large household of children of varied natures would naturally suggest to a wise parent the necessity for a more elastic domestic discipline and a larger tolerance than common.

The romantic history of Lady Grisell Hume—afterwards Lady Baillie of Jerviswood—would in all

likelihood have been lost to posterity had it not been preserved in the remarkable memoir written by her gifted but unfortunate daughter, Lady Murray of Stanhope. To this narrative we owe the interesting account of Grisell Hume's journey from Red-braes to the Tolbooth prison at Edinburgh for the purpose of conveying a secret message from her father to his friend Baillie of Jerviswood, imprisoned there.

Robert Baillie was one of the ablest statesmen of his time, and he was, like Sir Patrick Hume, of the Covenanting and protesting party and shared his hatred of the political principles of the Government. But Baillie was less fortunate than his friend of Polwarth. Both endured several terms of imprisonment and were forced to pay large sums of money in fines; but while Sir Patrick Hume successfully evaded the extreme fury of his foes and lived to see his cause triumphant and himself restored to more than his former grandeur of station, Baillie finally became a martyr to the cause he had so nobly espoused, parting with his life at the Cross of Edinburgh "as a testimony against a Papist's invading the throne"—to use his own words.

Grisell Hume was a girl of little more than

eleven years old when she accomplished this first journey to Edinburgh—for it was but the precursor of others. She may have jogged along in the carrier's cart over the rough highway or, which is more likely, have ridden "pillion" all the way on horseback behind one of her father's trusty yeomen in his suit of hodden grey and broad Scots bonnet,—herself, like any country wench, wrapped in her "tartan screen." One can easily imagine how the country-bred girl would shrink from the rude noises of the crowded Edinburgh streets which at that period were, to put it mildly, "undisturbed by any purification," and how her poetic fancy would be stirred by the sight of the formidable Castle in the air and the towering mass of Arthur's Seat high above the Babel of the town.

How she won past the guarded portals of the Tolbooth is a mystery. Were Grisell's manners indeed so dove-like yet so serpent-wise that the grim jailer fell under their spell and hastened to let her in? Or was Joanna Baillie's adroit imagining true to fact?

"Long round these walls she had been straying,  
As if with other children playing;  
Long near the gate had kept her watch  
The sentry's changing-time to catch.



With stealthy steps she gained the shade  
By the close-winding staircase made,  
And when the surly turnkey entered,  
But little dreaming in his mind  
Who followed him so close behind,  
Into the darkened cell, with beating heart she ventured."

On the occasion of another visit to the prison Grisell met her future husband, young George Baillie, a tall student of the law summoned in haste from Holland to see his father. What tragic memories of that grim Tolbooth were shared by these lovers ere all was said and done!

In 1684 the persecution assumed a more virulent form. Baillie of Jerviswood, after a period of precarious freedom, was again in prison, and Sir Patrick Hume, although he had been liberated "at the pleasure of the King" some time before, saw that he could not hope to evade the fury of the Government much longer. He therefore resolved to go into hiding until he could seize a convenient opportunity of escaping into Holland.

Parties of soldiers not infrequently came to Redbraes Castle in search of him and, to the anxiety of his family, used the castle as a garrison. In these circumstances it was resolved that Sir Patrick should occupy the family vault under Polwarth

Church about a mile from Red-braes, and a few necessary comforts were secretly conveyed thither. Here he lay concealed "for the space of a winter's month," and here his daughter Grisell accomplished her historic act of filial devotion.

At this time she was about nineteen years old and, according to the description, "very handsome, with a light and sweetness in her eyes very uncommon, and great delicacy in all her features ; her hair was chestnut, and she had the finest complexion, with clearest red in her cheeks and lips."

We can still see, through the mist of years, that alert and rosy maiden stealing down the beech avenue and along the dark highway in the winter midnights, glad when the fitful moonlight did not shine and she could send a timorous beam from her swiftly darkened lamp before her into the friendly darkness. She might well be an easy prey to all the terrors which an active imagination can conjure out of night, but she was fearless of all merely material evil. The laughter and the oaths of soldiers carousing in the kitchen and the hall are borne faintly on the air, but the unexplainable noises of night have more power than they to affright her. She stumbles over the graveyard

mounds, and her blood runs cold with terror inspired by the thick-coming remembrances of tales of *spunkies* and *deid-lichts* and wandering spirits of the dead. But the path of duty lies straight through this tangle of terror, and her father's blessing awaits his "sweet guardian" where he hides in the chilly vault of his race.

Onward she goes, and her lips curve into a humorous smile as she thinks of the dainty purloined sheep's head in her apron and of the subterfuge to which she had resorted that her father might have sufficient food without arousing the suspicion of the servants. She will tell her father the tale of how brother Sandy waxed indignant when he discovered that the toothsome fare which he loved equally with his sire had disappeared, and she would mimic his amazed cry, "Mother! Will ye look at Grisell? While we have been eating our broth she has eaten up the whole sheep's head!"

Laughter would wake the echoes of the vault, and that would be a lightsome change from the grave Latin psalms which Sir Patrick was learning by rote to while the tedious hours away.

At the end of a month Sir Patrick found the atmosphere of the vault unbearable, and a hiding-

place was found for him beneath the flooring of a disused room on the ground flat of his own house. He had not enjoyed this unique home-coming beyond a fortnight, however, when he was compelled to vacate his bed under the floor owing to the inrush of water. But the dauntless spirit of Sir Patrick rallied after this last refuge in his own country was denied him, and, at length, after many hairbreadth escapes he succeeded in escaping in disguise to Holland. There he remained a year, practising medicine under the assumed name of Dr. Peter Wallace. At the end of that time Sir Patrick, along with many others exiled like himself and for similar reasons, returned to Scotland with the Duke of Argyle's expedition—a company of Protestant rebels against the Catholic king, James II. This was in 1685, and the rising proved unfortunate and ineffectual.

Thus Sir Patrick's "last estate was worse than his first." He had again to flee into Holland with a price set upon his head and the knowledge that his large defenceless family at Red-braes would, in all probability, be reduced to extreme poverty because his estates were speedily confiscated by the Crown and declared forfeited.

Then ensued a period of care and distress for Lady Hume and the children at Red-braes. But Grisell, the dauntless and resourceful eldest daughter, faced all emergencies with composure and cheerfulness and was her delicate mother's right hand. The mother and daughter journeyed together to London—a formidable undertaking!—to endeavour to wrest a pittance for the support of the helpless family out of their confiscated wealth. A hundred and fifty pounds per annum was obtained after much delay, and this was sufficient to enable them all to join Sir Patrick at Utrecht, where he had finally settled “because the chirurgions were too throng at Bourdeaux.”

Things went fairly well with the reunited family in Holland. Long afterwards Grisell declared that her sojourn there was the happiest time in her life. Perhaps it was so because “love's young dream” glorified the dulness of the Dutch town, for young George Baillie was also in Utrecht, exiled and impoverished like themselves and with the tragic memory ever haunting his thoughts of his good father martyred at Edinburgh Cross.

Sir Patrick Hume was a scholar as well as a statesman and patriot, and he attracted to his house

in Utrecht not only the numerous Scottish refugees who sought his crippled hospitality but also the professors and learned men of the town.

At this period Grisell's energies seemed to have been absorbed in the art of keeping house on limited means, not for the family circle alone but for her father's frequent guests as well ; though, curiously enough, it was amid this daily round of practical duties that her gift of song awoke, and in her leisure moments she might have been seen writing down her compositions in the book now supposed to be lost.

But Grisell had also time for much merriment, and along with her fair sister Christian, who seems to have been the ornamental member of the family, and with other exiled Scottish maidens, joined in the various amusements of the youthful Hollanders. There was much aggravating girlish giggling, no doubt, over the ponderous attentions paid to them by the gallants who, like young Patrick Hume and George Baillie, were in the suite of the Prince of Orange. Along with other Scottish exiles of like degree, they rode in the Prince's Guards, taking their turn of standing sentry at his gates ; and when they were minded for a frolic, which was not

infrequently, they would set their halberts against the entrance to hinder the pretty girls from passing in without paying toll with a kiss.

It is recorded that Grisell Hume took much pride in her soldier brother's attire and that her clever hands manufactured the point-lace collars and cuffs which it was the fashion of the Prince's soldiers to wear; and, although she gladly went with her sister Christian to the various balls of the town and footed it lightly in the dance with her grave-faced young lover, Grisell's true kingdom was that of home.

There she was her fragile mother's willing substitute and the idol of her father; there she spread the hospitable board for his friends and afterwards sang to the banished Scottish folk songs that breathed of the heather in their native land.

Sometimes, perhaps, her father or her lover would say, "Sing one of your own songs, Grisell," and, with many blushes, she would modestly comply. It might be "Werena my heart licht, I wad dee," or a verse from "The Ewe-buchtin's bonnie":—

"Oh, the ewe-buchtin's bonnie baith e'ening and morn  
When our blithe shepherds play on the bog-reed and horn;  
While we're milking they're lilting baith pleasant and clear,  
But my heart's like to break when I think of my dear."



Tears would fill the eyes of those stern-faced exiles at the sound of the Doric lay of the grey land many of them would never see again, while the Dutch professors would sit gravely smiling at the father's hardly concealed pride in the clever girl, who had for their entertainment so deftly

“ Spread the servit white,  
And decked the board with tankard bright,”

and who was a poetess also.

At length, after three and a half years' residence in Holland, the exiles were gladdened by William of Orange's acceptance of the invitation sent him both by the Whig and by the Tory leaders to come over to England and combine with their following against James II. The Prince sailed with his fleet, and in his train were Sir Patrick Hume, his son, and George Baillie. The voyage proved at the outset disastrous, the fleet being scattered by a storm and much treasure and ammunition lost; but the second attempt was altogether successful and the mission of the Prince accomplished. The English were enthusiastic, and harassed Scotland, holding fast the tattered flag of the Covenant, gladly sought the protection of a Protestant deliverer.

When affairs were finally arranged in England

Lady Hume and her family returned in the suite of the Princess Mary, wife of the Prince of Orange; but the fair and delicate daughter Christian had died in the land of exile.

The Princess Mary, about to ascend the English throne—for her father, James II., had fled, and her husband and she were invited to reign in consort—asked Grisell Hume to become one of her maids of honour, but Grisell preferred returning to Red-braes with her kindred. She was incapable of being dazzled by the prospect of the grandeur of a court. Her heart longed for the freedom of home and woodland and, moreover, her prospects of marriage were brightening, for George Baillie, too, had experienced fortune's smile and was looking forward to the restoration of his estates and his wealth. The constant lovers were at length wedded, the marriage taking place at Red-braes Castle on September 17, 1692, when the bride was twenty-eight and the bridegroom twenty-nine years old.

Two daughters and a son were born of the union, but the son died in infancy. George Baillie himself died after an illness of forty-eight hours in 1738. But his wife survived him eight years and died in 1746 at the age of eighty-one.

## WERENA MY HEART LICHT, I WAD DEE

There was ance a may and she lo'ed na men ;  
 She biggit her bonnie bouir doon in yon glen ;  
 But now she cries, Dule, and a-well-a-day !  
 Come doon the green gait, and come here-away

When bonnie young Johnie cam ower the sea,  
 He said he saw naething sae bonnie as me ;  
 He hecht me baith rings, and monie braw things ;  
 And werena my heart licht, I wad dee.

He had a wee tittie that lo'ed na me,  
 Because I was twice as bonnie as she ;  
 She raised such a pother 'twixt him and his mother,  
 That werena my heart licht, I wad dee.

The day it was set, and the bridal to be ;  
 The wife took a dwam and lay doon to dee ;  
 She maned and she graned wi' false dolour and pain,  
 Till he vowed that he ne'er wad see me again.

His kin was for ane o' a higher degree,  
 Said, What wad he do wi' the like o' me ?  
 Albeit I was bonnie, I wasna for Johnie,—  
 And werena my heart licht, I wad dee.

They said I had neither cow nor calf,  
 Nor dribbles o' drink rins through the draff,  
 Nor pickles o' meal rins through the mill-e'e ;—  
 And werena my heart licht, I wad dee.

His titty, she was baith wylie and slee,  
She spied me as I cam ower the lea,  
And then she ran in and made a loud din ;—  
Believe your ain een an' ye trow na me !

His bonnet stood aye fu' round on his broo,  
His auld ane looked better than monie ane's new ;  
But now he lets wear ony gait it will hing  
And casts himsel' dowie upon the corn-bing.

And now he gangs daund'ring about the dykes,  
And a' he dow do is to hund the tykes ;  
The live-lang night he ne'er steeks an e'e ;  
And werena my heart licht, I wad dee.

Were I young for thee as I hae been,  
We should hae been galloping doon on yon green,  
And linkin' it on the lilie-white lea,  
And wow ! gin I were but young for thee !

## CHAPTER III

### THE SONGSTRESS IN SOCIAL LIFE: MRS. ALISON COCKBURN

THE Genius of Scottish Song has bestowed a somewhat frugal share of the gift of melody upon the beautiful and witty Border belle, Alison Rutherford, better known as Mrs. Cockburn, the author of that version of the "Flowers of the Forest" beginning

"I've seen the smiling of Fortune beguiling";

and, while liberally endowing her with a brilliant and shallow faculty of rhyming, has withheld that crowning glory of inspiration which was bestowed, though only for one brief hour, upon Miss Jean Elliot of Minto, enabling her to create that peerless new song of Flodden Field, the other version of the "Flowers of the Forest," beginning

"I've heard them lilting at our ewe-milking."

In a note to Mrs. Cockburn's version of the song



MRS. COCKBURN

*From a Portrait in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery*





in Chambers's "Scottish Songs," the writer somewhat curtly calls it "an imitation of Miss Elliot's song"; but the sister sets of the "Flowers of the Forest" are widely dissimilar both in subject and treatment, the "imitation"—if there can be said to be any—being in the title, which both ladies took from the ancient Scots melody of a lost song. The poetic designation of *Flowers of the Forest* was, moreover, a local and very old name for the men of that district of Scotland embraced within the counties of Selkirk, Roxburgh, and Peebles, who were noted in ballad and other literature for their splendid physique and their gallantry in war.

It is possible that Miss Jean Elliot's version, which appeared in the guise of an old ballad revived and at once leapt into fame, may have stimulated Mrs. Cockburn also to publish her early song of her own country-side; but there is good reason for believing that Mrs. Cockburn's version was written twelve years at least before that of Miss Elliot, although it was nine years after the latter is supposed to have written her song before Mrs. Cockburn's was printed in *The Lark*, 1765.

It has been conjectured that the theme of Mrs. Cockburn's song was suggested by the gradual

depopulation of the region known as "the Forest." According to Sir Walter Scott, however, writing in 1829—thirty-five years after Mrs. Cockburn's death—"the occasion was a calamitous period in Selkirkshire or Ettrick Forest, when no fewer than seven lairds or proprietors, men of ancient family and inheritance, having been engaged in some imprudent speculations, became insolvent in one year." Sir Walter also states that a turret-chamber in Mrs. Cockburn's maiden home in the house of Fairnalie was shown as the place where her song was written.

There is a tradition that a gentleman riding one day down the glen to Fairnalie overheard a shepherd whistling a very plaintive and beautiful air. The gentleman carried it in his memory and repeated it to the youthful Miss Alison Rutherford, who at once recognised it as the old melody of the "Flowers of the Forest" and, at her friend's request, agreed to provide appropriate words.

The ancient tune entitled "The Flowres of the Forrester" seems to have been originally set to words lamenting the disastrous battle of Flodden, and it was preserved in the manuscript lute-book, now known as the "Skene Collection," belonging

to a lady of the family of that name who flourished in the reign of Charles I., along with upwards of eighty popular Scottish melodies, many of which owed their rescue from oblivion—to which the gross or otherwise unworthy nature of their accompanying words would have consigned them—to the musical zeal of that accomplished lady.

Alison Rutherford was rather a born leader of society than a wooer of the shy Spirit of Poesy. She had wit, and position, and a sparkling affectionateness of nature which made her the idol and the fashionable toast of her circle; and it is possible that her faculty of song was frittered away in an effervescence of clever talkativeness. Her talent was lavished in the art of conversation and in a perpetual fusilade of witty letter-writing. We cannot but regret that she dissipated, in this brilliant but facile fashion, those “hours of insight” which her poetic imagination sometimes brought her and that she did not leave a more substantial literary legacy than a few clever sets of “toasts”—the fugitive fad of her time—a few witty parodies long since become obscure, and her song of “The Flowers of the Forest.”

Her interesting personality, however, remains

living and vivid, for much of the romance of old Edinburgh circles round her name.

She was a member of the family of a wealthy Border laird of "lang pedigree." She was born in her father's house of Fairnalie on October 8, 1712, the estate being situated in Selkirkshire, part of the classical region already mentioned under the name of "the Forest" or Ettrickdale.

The memorials of her childhood and youth are extremely scanty; but, to judge from her own earliest recollections, she must have been highly imaginative, emulous, and fond of approbation. She says, "I can this moment figure myself running as fast as a greyhound, in a hot summer day, to have the pleasure of plunging into Tweed to cool me. . . . As for the chase of the silver spoon at the end of the rainbow, nothing could exceed my ardour except my faith which created it. I can see myself the first favourite at Lamotte's dancing, and remember turning pale and red with the ambition of applause."

Except for traditions of her beauty, her wit, and her love of dancing, and the story of an ineffectual love-affair wafted out of the past to us like the scent of withered roses from an

ancient urn, we have no further trace of Alison Rutherford.

The Border maiden left her father's house very early, being only nineteen years old when she married Mr. Patrick Cockburn, an Edinburgh advocate, son of the Laird of Ormiston, Lord Justice-Clerk of Scotland at the time of the Union.

The somewhat elusive young belle now developed into an extremely lively and notable ornament of Edinburgh society. But the first few years of her married life seem to have been absorbed by the claims of her stately social position, and her natural love for dancing and other gay pastimes would appear to have been held in check by a characteristic desire to stand well in the somewhat austere eyes of her immediate family circle. Her father-in-law was a strict old gentleman of pronounced Presbyterian and Whig principles who must, at times, have been something of a cloud upon the sunny spirit of his young daughter-in-law. She tells a friend in a laughing fashion which, nevertheless, is pathetic in its youthful self-abnegation, that she "was married, strictly speaking, to a man of seventy-five—my father-in-law. I lived with him four years, and as the ambition had seized me to make him fond of

me, knowing also that nothing could please his son so much, I bestowed all my time and study to gain his approbation. He disapproved of plays and assemblies ; I never went to one."

But after his death the chrysalis became a butterfly and sought a more congenial element. Doubtless her husband would delight to be his beautiful wife's escort when she graced with her presence the fashionable concerts held in St. Cecilia's Hall in the select suburb of the Cowgate ; and he would also attend her when she went in all the formal grandeur of hoop and gorgeous satin gown in her silken-lined sedan chair to the very exclusive balls in the Assembly Close, which were presided over by martinet dowagers wearing the badge of their office of lady-directresses—a gold medal with a motto and device emblematic of charity and parental tenderness.

We learn that the youthful Mrs. Cockburn was an insatiable reader, albeit chiefly of novels, and doubtless she would patronise that new venture—Allan Ramsay's circulating library in the Lucken-booths, and talk to him of his famous pastoral "The Gentle Shepherd" in a fashion well calculated to make vain Allan's heart-strings tingle with

pleasure ; and there also she would obtain the latest broadsheet or the last volume of his "Tea-Table Miscellany," and afterwards delight her guests by singing its songs to the accompaniment of her spinet.

Mr. Patrick Cockburn's town-house was situated in Blair's Close on the Castle Hill, then an extremely fashionable locality ; for the Edinburgh of those days was a high-piled, tortuous-wynded city towering skyward across the gorge of the Nor' Loch, its only aim being to keep within the shelter of the old Flodden Wall. The Canongate, especially, was occupied by the nobility and gentry.

The Scotland of Mrs. Cockburn's day was widely different from that of Lady Grisell Baillie. The struggle for the supremacy of "Christ's Kirk and Covenant" had ended in victory for its adherents so long ago that its once sharply defined tenets were moss-grown, and there prevailed a sour and formal religiosity which was fast becoming unendurable to the lively intellects of those who were emerging as the heralds of Scotland's intellectual *Renaissance*, while the political struggles of the country were centred no longer on the creeds of kings but upon their rival claims to the throne.

Mrs. Cockburn was in the full flush of her



brilliant matronhood in the stirring year of the "Forty-five," and doubtless the witty Whig dame would flout and jeer in the seclusion of her Edinburgh home when she, among so many of the startled citizens, stood at her window one grey dawning, in all the *négligé* of rudely awakened slumber and watched Prince "Charlie" and the men of the Cameron clan marching along the street, looking very much surprised at their bloodless capture of the city. True, they advanced with swords drawn and colours flying, quite ready to "meet the foe"; but the canny citizens had either a private hankering after the Stuart cause, or they judged that "discretion was the better part of valour" in the face of that legion of fluttering kilts and the savage din of pipes skirling

"We'll awa to Shirramuir to haud the Whigs in order."

When the young Pretender held his brief court at Holyrood and danced with many a fair Edinburgh dame, the shrewd wife of law-abiding Patrick Cockburn, fond though she was of dancing, would not be among those who boasted of the honour of being the Prince's *vis-à-vis*. It was more probable that she was entertaining her friends at home with

the caustic quips and cranks and mocking rhymes on the on-goings at Holyrood in which her soul delighted.

Her wit outran her discretion on a certain dark evening in September and very nearly involved her in a tragedy. Mrs. Cockburn on that evening was returning homeward from a visit to her relatives, the Keiths of Ravelston. She had nearly reached her destination when the coach in which she was seated was rudely stopped at the West Bow by the Highland Guard, who held that port and demurred against admitting the equipage without first searching the lady, who was unknown to them, for documents that she might perhaps be bringing to the Whigs within the city. General Preston, who held the Castle against the Pretender, overheard the altercation ascending from the West Bow and, the night being dark and only foes being expected from that quarter, he ordered his soldiers to fire "as if at random." The coach was pierced by several bullets and Mrs. Cockburn was extremely frightened, while the horse of her escort, the Earl of Dundonald, was shot under him.

This was a grave state of matters, but not so grave as it might have been, for if the trembling

lady had been searched there would have been found in her pocket a parody she had written on one of the Pretender's utopian proclamations, with a recital of which she had very characteristically been entertaining her friends the Keiths—an act of mischievous raillery on her part, for the Keiths were Jacobites and enthusiastic adherents of the Prince's cause. It was, in fact, because of his recognition of the Ravelston arms on the coach that the Highland officer had allowed Mrs. Cockburn to pass. Here is a verse of her parody, which was sung to the air of “Clout the Cauldron” :—

“Have ye any laws to mend  
 Or have ye any grievance?  
 I'm a hero to my trade  
 And truly a most leal Prince.  
 Would ye have war,—would ye have peace?  
 Would ye be free from taxes?  
 Come chapping at my palace door,  
 Ye needna doubt of access.”

Culloden with all its woes was the *finale* of Prince Charlie's bloodless victory over Edinburgh, and Mrs. Cockburn, being poet and woman as well as Whig, must have grieved when the tattered Highland standards were, by order of the callous Duke of Cumberland, carried in ignoble procession to the

Mercat Cross and burned there by the common hangman, while the herald proclaimed the names of the mighty chiefs to whom they belonged and the crowd looked on in significant silence.

Mr. Patrick Cockburn died, after a long illness, at Musselburgh in 1753. "I was twenty years united to a lover and a friend," said his widow long afterwards. Their only child was twenty-one years old when his father died. He was an officer in a dragoon regiment. Unfortunately he was of delicate constitution and his precarious health was a constant anxiety to his mother. "I would fly from anxiety if I could," she writes to a friend; "but it pursues me, and has done for twenty years. If Adam, my son, would give up coughing, I think I would be happy."

He died in 1780, being forty-eight years old. He seems to have been of a most kind and manly disposition; but, unlike his frank and volatile mother, he laboured under a painful feeling of shyness. He was reticent even to secretiveness regarding his personal joys and sorrows, hiding from his mother, much to her grief, even the pangs of death.

It was a peculiarity of Mrs. Cockburn's otherwise

impulsive temperament, that she also was reticent regarding deep personal experiences. It was not till many years after the deaths of her husband and son, when she wrote to a friend in grief, that in a generous sympathetic impulse she revealed the depth of her own sorrow. "Accept personal severity and it will be well; ride in rain, wind, and storm till you are fatigued to death, and spin on a great spinning-wheel and never sit down till weariness of nature makes you. I do assure you I have gone through all these exercises, and have reason to bless God my reason was preserved."

She who had such helpful sympathy for others was not left altogether desolate and lonely; and surely the brightest constellation of friends that ever a clever and sensitive woman possessed illumined Mrs. Cockburn's shadowed path through life. She removed her diminished household to Crichton Street, quite close to George Square, where dwelt her friends and relatives, the parents of the young Walter Scott.

Her home became a favourite resort of the *literati* of the city and also of much of its youth and beauty, for Mrs. Cockburn had a harmless fondness for match-making and was the *confidante* of many

a girl's budding love-affair. The young people came also to learn the last new song—of which she was sure to have first knowledge,—for these were the golden hours of the zenith of Scottish song, which had arisen out of the mire of vulgarity and immorality into a state of pristine splendour, for which we have chiefly to thank the high-born ladies of Scotland. Allan Ramsay's gift of "taking occasion by the hand" had done much to foster the national love for song, and his "Tea-Table Miscellany"—a collection of the cleansed and revived songs—had been aptly dedicated to

"Ilk lovely British lass,  
From ladies Charlotte, Anne, and Jean,  
Doon to ilk bonnie singing Bess  
That dances barefoot on the green."

The "Miscellany" and the "Orpheus Caledonius"—edited by Thomson and containing music as well as words—were the inevitable ornaments in the parlours of those of refined tastes, and nothing in the way of entertainment was hailed with such delight as the sympathetic singing of a Scots song. "The 'deil's buik' itself," says Chambers, "found some difficulty in keeping its place against the 'Tea-Table Miscellany.'" It may be well to remind

degenerate Scots that the *deil's buik* is vernacular for a pack of playing-cards.

Mrs. Cockburn's house in Crichton Street became famous as the *rendezvous* of the choicest spirits of Edinburgh at a period when the intellectual atmosphere was charged with the electricity of latent and dawning genius.

Lord Monboddo came and brought with him his fair daughter, "the lovely Burnett" of the ploughman bard who was the talk of the town. Mrs. Cockburn met Burns, and it is very interesting to know her estimate of his character. She writes to a friend:—"The town is at present agog with the ploughman poet, who receives adulation with native dignity, and is the very figure of his profession, strong and coarse, but has a most enthusiastic heart of love. He has seen Duchess Gordon and all the gay world; his favourite for looks and manners is Bess Burnet—no mean judge, indeed!"

In another communication to a friend we obtain a characteristic glimpse of Mrs. Cockburn's desire to emulate other poets and of her fatal habit of dissipating her song-impulse in letter-writing:—"Are you fond of poetry? Do you know Burns? I am to get a pretty little thing he calls 'The



Rosebud.' Maybe I'll send it next week. I wish I could write a ballad called 'The Forest Restored!'"

To her house in Crichton Street there frequently came her bosom friend, the lively Countess Anne of Balcarres, bringing her two fair daughters on a rare visit to the city, and it is quite possible that the mischievous Mrs. Cockburn, who was shrewd enough to suspect that the younger, Lady Anne, was the author of the popular song, "Auld Robin Gray," would bring her to confused blushes by requesting the favour of a verse sung by her own lips.

Lady Murray Keith—the prototype of Sir Walter Scott's still-in-the-future "Mrs. Bethune Baliol"—was also an *habituée* of the cheerful house in Crichton Street, and so was the eccentric "Suff Johnstone" with her mannish voice and attire and her tremendous vigour of language. Thither also came Mrs. Cockburn's friend of many years, David Hume, from his "retreat in James's Court"—that very elegant house which possessed "a cosy south room with a red wall-paper" and whose windows looked across the Firth of Forth towards Kirkcaldy, where David's crony, Adam Smith, sauntered by the

shore in the intervals of writing "The Wealth of Nations."

The Reverend John Home, author of "Douglas," often accompanied his kinsman, David Hume, in his visits to Mrs. Cockburn, who delighted to set a-rolling the ball of the favourite dispute between the two anent the proper spelling of their name. It may have been in that Crichton Street parlour that the philosopher proposed to the reverend poet to settle the question by casting dice. "Nay," said Home, "this is a most extraordinary proposal, indeed, Mr. Philosopher, for if you lose, you take your own name, and if I lose, I take another man's name!"

Young Walter Scott and his gentle sister and also his merry brother sprigs of the law had an unfailing welcome at Crichton Street. It was there, in that meeting-place of many wits and characters, that he unconsciously received impressions for his future "wizard's pen" to transfer—coloured—to immortal books. One can fancy him coming "hirpling" in with an anecdote on his lips and his pockets bulging with the newest parodies on the town's affairs: it might be "Claudero's" latest satire against the wanton destruction of Edinburgh's ancient land-

marks — “The Echo of the Royal Porch of Holyrood,” or “The Last Speech and Dying Words of the Mercat Cross, executed for the Horrid Crime of being an Incumbrance to the Street.”

Long after Mrs. Cockburn’s death Sir Walter Scott wrote an account of his old friend and her famous social reunions.

“In person and features,” he says, “she somewhat resembled Queen Elizabeth, but the nose was rather more aquiline. She was proud of her auburn hair, which remained unbleached by time even when she was upwards of eighty years old. . . . Her evening parties were very frequent, and included society distinguished both for condition and talents. The *petit souper*, which always concluded the evening, was, like that of Stella, which she used to quote on the occasion :—

‘A supper like her mighty self—  
Four nothings on four plates of delf;’

but they passed off more gaily than many costlier entertainments.”

Mrs. Cockburn remained interested in all social and literary events and in her friends, on whom

she lavished the bright kindness of her warm heart, throughout all the years of advancing infirmity and age, and she died, mourned by a wide and varied circle, in her house in Crichton Street on November 22, 1794, aged eighty-two.

She lies not far from the scene of her social fame,—in the north-east corner of the old burying-ground of the Chapel of Ease of St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh. Her tombstone is near the grave of the blind poet Blacklock, the earliest of Burns's Edinburgh critics to express his appreciation in writing.

### THE FLOWERS OF THE FOREST

I've seen the smiling  
Of Fortune beguiling ;  
I've felt all its favours, and found its decay ;  
Sweet was its blessing,  
Kind its caressing,  
But now it is fled—fled far away !

I've seen the forest  
Adorned the foremost,  
With flowers of the fairest, most pleasant and gay ;  
Sae bonnie was their blooming !  
Their scent the air perfuming !  
But now they are withered and a' wede away.

I've seen the morning  
With gold the hills adorning,  
And loud tempests storming before the mid-day ;  
I've seen Tweed's silver streams  
Glittering in the sunny beams  
Grow drumly and dark as they rolled on their way.

Oh, fickle Fortune !  
Why this cruel sporting ?  
Why thus perplex us, poor sons of a day ?  
Nae mair your smiles can cheer me,  
Nae mair your frowns can fear me,  
For the Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SONGSTRESS OF FLODDEN FIELD : MISS JEAN ELLIOT

IT is somewhat remarkable that we possess no authentic knowledge of any intimacy existing between the family of the Rutherfords of Fairnalie and that of the Elliots of Minto. Both estates lay in the region of the Selkirkshire "Forest," and the habit of visiting at widely distant country houses was a favourite pastime in the monotonous lives of the ladies of the Border counties.

It may be that anything like congenial friendship was impossible between Alison Rutherford and Jean Elliot, for the authors of the sister sets of the "Flowers of the Forest" were separated in age by a space of fifteen years, Jean Elliot being only a child of four when Alison Rutherford married at nineteen and left her father's home.

But it is natural to suppose that afterwards, when both ladies dwelt at the same time in the crowded



JEAN ELLIOT

*From a Portrait in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery*





town of old Edinburgh, the fact that each "belonged" to the same district would have been a link of union, especially when one remembers Mrs. Cockburn's genial hospitality and her capacity for attracting many different sorts of people to her social circle.

It is possible, however, that these two ladies might not be attracted towards each other. Mrs. Cockburn, although well-born, was by no means so aristocratic and exclusive as Miss Elliot, and the fact that the latter was an extremely reserved, precise, and studious spinster and, in short, the antipodes in temperament from Mrs. Cockburn, must be taken into account.

Jean was the fourth child of Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto, and was born in 1727. She came of a race noted for its soldiers, its statesmen, and its lawyers;—of a race, too, which possessed a decided literary bent.

Her grandfather—the first Lord Minto—made his name at the bar by rescuing a Covenanting minister called William Veitch from the anything but tender mercy of the Scottish Government in the last days of the persecution. He is also supposed to have aided Argyle's escape from Edinburgh, and

was, for seventeen years thereafter, an exile in Holland; but "the whirligig of time" brought in its "revenges," and the Revolution found him once more prominent on the Scottish bench. On one occasion, while on the Dumfries Circuit, he met his old client Veitch, then a parish minister, and in the course of conversation they reverted to the perilous days gone by.

"Had it no been for me, my lord," said the minister playfully, "ye'd hae been writing papers yet at a plack a page!"

"And had it no been for me, Willie," was the retort, "the pyots wad hae been picking your pow on the Netherbow Port."

His son, the second Sir Gilbert, was also an advocate, and he held the office of Lord Justice-Clerk for Scotland. He, along with Duncan Forbes of Culloden, was the victim of the clever Lady Wardlaw's ingenious hoax—her reputed recovery of what proved to be the spurious ancient ballad of "Hardyknute"—and these gentlemen were at the expense of publishing the ballad in leaflet form.

Sir Gilbert gave his family a liberal education, and it is recorded that his daughter Jean was fond

of French literature, and also that her father set great store on her opinion regarding the various legal cases with which he was entrusted. From these and other hints of her intellectual leanings, it would appear that the lady was something of a blue-stocking.

Her brother, the third Sir Gilbert, was also an eminent lawyer and was besides possessed of uncommon literary and critical acumen. His taste for pure English is sufficiently vouched for by the fact that he was entrusted with the task of correcting the manuscript of Home's "Douglas." He was the author of the somewhat affected pastoral song, beginning

"My sheep I neglected, I left my sheep-hook,  
And all the gay haunts of my youth I forsook,  
No more for Aminta fresh garlands I wove;  
Ambition, I said, would cure me of love."

Unlike her sister-singer, Mrs. Cockburn, Miss Elliot was remarkably plain. She had "a sensible face and a slender, well-shaped figure." We learn that she was finical in the extreme neatness of her attire and that she took pains, even when her youth had fled, to accommodate herself to the rotations of fashion. In her old age she was, according to

Chambers, "a remarkably agreeable maiden lady with a prodigious fund of Scottish anecdote"; and Miss Sarah Tytler, who had the good fortune to examine a miniature of Miss Elliot executed in advanced years, says it represents "a little, delicate old woman in close cap, ruffle, and ample snowy neckerchief. She has the large nose and mouth which belong to an expressive rather than a beautiful face, but the mouth is kindly in its sagacity."

Regarding the creation of Miss Jean Elliot's incomparable version of "The Flowers of the Forest," the tradition is, that one evening in 1756—when Miss Elliot was twenty-eight years old—she was riding homeward in the twilight along with her brother in the family coach. The conversation of the congenial pair, alive to the poetic and romantic influences of the time and the scene, turned upon the disaster of Flodden, to which a hundred men of "the Forest" had marched with their green banner to join the Scottish army—to return, after the battle, a broken and dejected remnant with their tale of "dule and wae."

Sir Gilbert suggested to his sister that she should write a new ballad of Flodden Field on the lines of the old one fast passing out of remembrance. She

owned that it was a pleasing theme, and hummed two lines of the old ballad—two haunting lines which, apparently, were all she knew—

“ I’ve heard them lilting at our yowe-milking,

. . . . .  
The Flowers of the Forest are a’ wede away.”

Sir Gilbert, being skilled in the ways of women, which, like dreams, are supposed to “go by contraries,” laid a wager of a pair of gloves or a set of ribbons that his sister could *not* write a new ballad of Flodden! She accepted the challenge and, as the lumbering coach drowsed along over the darkening highway and silence fell upon the occupants, she meditated upon the subject until the fire of genius burned in her heart and brought with it kindling poetic fancies and words of fit and flowing measure, and, in that “hour of insight,” she hastily constructed the first rough draft of the song which she afterwards elaborated to such supreme purpose. And who has not been thrilled by the plaintive wail of that song?—

“ Dule and wae for the order sent our lads to the Border,

The English, for ance, by guile wan the day ;

The Flowers of the Forest, that fought aye the foremost,—

The prime o’ our land are cauld in the clay.”

Writing in connection with Miss Elliot's preservation of two lines of the ancient ballad in her rendering of the theme, Sir Walter Scott contributes another line, his sole remembrance of the lost ballad :—

“Now I ride single in my saddle”—

and he observes of this line that it contains “a most affecting image of desolation, as proceeding from the lips of a lady who, according to the old Scottish fashion, had been accustomed to ride on the same horse with her husband.”

Miss Jean Elliot's rendering of “The Flowers of the Forest” is still sung to the original melody as it appears in the Skene collection; but Mrs. Cockburn's impassioned protest against “Fickle Fortune,” which is the more popular of the two songs, has been set to a very fine and elaborate variation on the ancient tune.

Upon the death of Miss Elliot's father in 1766 her brother inherited the estate of Minto and took up residence there, and, as the custom of the gentlewomen of old Scottish families was, the ladies vacated their old home, and they retired to the family mansion of Minto House in Edinburgh. As years



passed on the household of women dwindled and the family circle became ever narrower. Some were married and went to homes of their own; some of the younger sons went abroad and were scattered

“By mount and stream and sea.”

The widowed mother was laid to rest in the grave of her husband, and eventually Miss Jean was left solitary. She “flitted” her household belongings from the great silent house of her race and took up her life as best she might in the then new and exclusive Brown’s Square. There she dwelt, having for neighbours Sir John Drummond, the future baronet of Hawthornden; Henry Mackenzie, the “Man of Feeling”; and the last of the “guid Scots law lords,” Lord Glenlee, who kept to the habits and the locality of the Old Town long after such were utterly discredited. Like Lord Glenlee, Miss Jean Elliot was one of those who clung to the things of the past, and she was seen in the narrow streets of old Edinburgh in the traditional “last sedan chair,” carried by the *last* of the picturesque Highland servitors summoned to his old-world task by the *last* of the caddies.

But Miss Elliot returned to her beloved Forest to die; and fitting, indeed, it was that the classic region, whose spirit she had so mystically interpreted, should give her aged body a resting grave. She died on March 29, 1805, aged seventy-eight, in her brother Admiral Elliot's mansion.

### THE FLOWERS OF THE FOREST

I've heard them lilting at our yowe-milking,  
 Lasses a' lilting before the dawn o' day;  
 But now they are moaning on ilka green loaning—  
 The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.

At buchts, in the morning, nae blythe lads are scorning,  
 The lasses are lonely and dowie and wae;  
 Nae daffin', nae gabbin', but sighing and sabbing,  
 Ilk ane lifts her leglin and hies her away.

In hairst, at the shearing, nae youths now are jeering,  
 The bandsters are lyart and runkled and grey;  
 At fair or at preaching, nae wooing, nae fleeching,—  
 The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.

At e'en, in the gloaming, nae swankies are roaming  
 'Bout stacks wi' the lasses at bogle to play;  
 But ilk ane sits drearie, lamenting her dearie,—  
 The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.

## SONGSTRESS OF FLODDEN FIELD 55

Dule and wae for the order sent our lads to the Border,  
The English, for ance, by guile wan the day ;  
The Flowers of the Forest, that foucht aye the foremost,—  
The prime o' our land, are cauld in the clay.

We'll hear nae mair lilting at the yowe-milking,  
Women and bairns are heartless and wae ;  
Sighing and moaning on ilka green loaning—  
The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.

To-day, by a curious evolution of circumstance, the old air of this song has regained its ancient ascendancy over the words, which bid fair to be forgotten even by the perfervid Scot. But the melody and its title have become the coronach of the Scottish nation. When a soldier is borne to his grave it is wafted on the keen blast that sweeps Edinburgh's classic streets ; it is whispered among the tattered battle-flags that hang in the Scottish Cathedral of St. Giles. And not there only, for no matter in what alien dust Scotland lays her fallen heroes to rest, the wail of their native pipes in "The Flowers of the Forest" is their patriotic requiem. The South African veldt has heard it ; the Egyptian Sphinx has approved its inscrutable woe ; and India and China have added its mystic burden to the gathered sorrow of nations.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SONGSTRESS OF SENTIMENT : SUSANNA BLAMIRE

**I**MAGINE a country roadside in stony Cumberland. It stretches bare and white between vivid clover-fields glistening with a gossamer film of morning dew ; the pastoral uplands slope bountifully to the base of the misty mountains, and here and there, embosomed amid oaks, lies many a grey stone "Hall." The jingle of sheep-bells comes faintly over the meadows, through which the river Caldew unwinds its shining links until it disappears in the mists that curl round the feet of Helvellyn and his kindred mountains.

It is a grey day, typical of Cumberland, luminous and softly warm, for the sun will ere long dispel the morning mists. Behind a cloud of smoke there is a glimpse of village roofs, and the clang of many forges smites the morning stillness of Nature. A wandering piper with his dog saunters

along to his distant *rendezvous*, the village green, and he tunes his reeds as he walks. Suddenly the dog pricks up his battle-torn ears, he barks, there is a helter-skelter of a pony's hoofs echoing on the road; the piper looks over his shoulder and sees the rider—a lively girl of sixteen, her brown hair tossing behind her with the speed of motion, her brown eyes shining with merriment, her slight figure alert and triumphant with the joy of living.

In a moment she slips down from her shaggy steed, she insists that the grinning vagrant shall pipe a lively jig, and in a flash she is dancing blithely on the rough highway while the dog gambols round her and snaps playfully at the fluttering ribbons of her gown.

This embodiment of joyous youth is Susanna Blamire, the future author of perhaps the most pathetic love-song ever penned:—

“What ails this heart o’ mine ?

What means this watery e’e ?

What gars me turn as cauld as death

When I tak leave o’ thee ?

When thou art far awa’

Thou’lt dearer grow to me,

But change of place and change o’ folk

May gar thy fancy gee.”

Her life, so bright and free in its morning, was to be shadowed by precarious health and constant pain, by melancholy and by solitude, and by disappointed love. Of Susanna Blamire it can truthfully be said that she "learned in suffering what she taught in song."

Susanna Blamire was not of Scottish birth, but, during a prolonged residence in Scotland at an impressionable period of her life, she absorbed the spirit and the vernacular of the country so thoroughly that her lyrics are gladly treasured as a rich addition to Scottish song.

The similarity between the dialects and, to a great extent, the characters of the Cumbrian dalesman and the Scottish peasant, rendered it easy for Susanna Blamire, a native of Cumberland, to weave into song the feelings common to both and to gain an entrance into Scottish hearts with such gems of song as "What ails this heart o' mine?" "The Waefu' Heart," and "The Siller Crown"—better known under the name of "Ye shall walk in silk attire." At the same time she endeared herself to her countrymen by writing for them songs characterised by homely vigour and tender sentiment, duly enriched by being set forth in their own

rugged *patois*—songs such as “Wey, Ned, man!” “Barley Broth,” and the exquisite ditty, “Auld Robin Forbes,” still sung with enthusiasm in the dales; while “The Nabob” enjoyed an extraordinary popularity in Scotland. It was printed anonymously—as were all her songs—in the *Scots Magazine* for 1803, but is supposed to have been written fifteen years earlier than that date.

Susanna Blamire was born in Cumberland, at Cardew Hall, about six miles from Carlisle, on January 12, 1747. Her father was a fine specimen of the hospitable and independent English yeoman who lived on his own estate and was on terms of intimacy alike with “gentle and simple” among his neighbours.

Susanna was the youngest of a family of four. Her mother, who was not robust, seems to have bequeathed to her daughter her own delicate constitution. She died when Susanna was seven years old. Soon afterwards the father married again, and the four children were sent to reside with their dead mother’s sister-in-law, Mrs. Simpson, a lady of independent means and also, it would appear, of independent speech, who begged that the children might be sent to her for their upbringing as she “mistrusted step-mothers!”



This vigorous lady's farmhouse of Thackwood Nook was an ideal home for rearing the delicate child Susanna. There she grew apparently strong and went with her brothers and sister to the dame-school in the village of Raughton Head, trudging the mile thither from her aunt's home in all weathers.

This would seem to have been the only school the future songstress ever attended, and we are left to infer that she acquired her many accomplishments of dancing, painting, music, &c., by attending classes in the neighbouring town of Carlisle.

Her love for music and for reading amounted to a passion. It is told of her that, in her young maidenhood when the lyric impulse inspired her, she would carry her guitar to the secluded woods behind Thackwood Nook and compose verses to suit her favourite tunes.

She seems to have "picked up" an immense amount of miscellaneous knowledge on the wing, as it were, for the volatile buoyancy of her nature precluded any systematic course of study. She was especially fond of poetry: she knew and loved the works of Milton, Collins, Gray, and Prior, and Allan Ramsay's "Gentle Shepherd" was often her woodland companion. She must have heard echoes,

too, of Burns's songs and of Tannahill's sylvan melodies, for Burns was even then singing while he ploughed the Ayrshire fields and Tannahill was listlessly weaving at his loom in Paisley.

Did no premonition touch Susanna Blamire's "prophetic soul" when she took her evening walks amid the Cumberland woods and meadows, of the coming of the great interpreters of the scenery of her native district—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey?

While she dreamed in the silent woods and spun her tiny thread of melody, did no mystic presage ever visit her of the awakening which would come to hill and dale at the call of these master singers?

There seems to have been a profound strain of melancholy in her bright nature. It may have been caused by the monotony of her life, for undoubtedly her days were filled with homely interests, but probably it was the shadow cast upon her susceptible spirit by her fragile health.

Her vivacity and her gift of song rendered her a great favourite among the people of the dale. No dance, no party or picnic, no harvest-home feast, and no "merry neet" was complete without her presence. Her songs were written out and sent

round from hand to hand to be learned and sung on festive occasions, and she was the delight of the kindly dalesmen, who spoke of her as "a bonnie and varra lish (very lively) young lass."

Nor was it at rustic gatherings only that the bright girl shone. Her graceful manners, her elegance, and her animation combined to render her the darling of her own class; and if her charm had expended itself among her equals Susanna Blamire would have been spared much grief, and her songs of love would in all probability have been songs unsung.

Unfortunately for her peace of mind, the spell of her winning personality penetrated to circles far above her own in social importance. While on a visit to one of her aunts, whose husband was curate of Chillingham, she met the daughter of the noble family of Tankerville, at that time in residence at Chillingham Castle. Susanna seems to have fascinated the Lady Isabelle, who was inspired with such an affection for her that she wrote to the redoubtable aunt Simpson requesting that Susanna might be allowed to make a lengthy stay at the castle. The request was grudgingly granted and, in a letter of the sensible daleswoman's still extant, she frankly

says that, although "Susan was a fine girl," she considers it unaccountable that the family of Tankerville should take so much interest in her !

Susanna, clearly, had "no honour" among her kindred on this occasion at least. Nevertheless, her wit, her cleverness, and her faculty for stringing together amusing verses seem to have pleased the Earl and Countess of Tankerville and their romantic daughter. But Susanna lost her heart to the Earl's son, and he is said to have warmly reciprocated her love. The parents of the heir of the Tankervilles disapproved, the young lordling was under his strong-willed mother's thumb, and Susanna was politely banished from the Castle.

It is to this unfortunate love-affair that we owe her sweetest songs, and surely it was true love, and not the ambition of a title-glamoured girl, that inspired the "Waefu' Heart":—

"When I gang oot at e'en  
 Or take the morning air,  
 Ilk rustling bush will seem to say  
 I used to meet thee there.  
 Then I'll sit down and cry  
 And live aneath the tree,  
 And when a leaf fa's in my lap  
 I'll ca't a word from thee."

But if success in love was denied her she was richly solaced by friendship's temperate affection. It was the custom for the wealthier families of the dale to go to Carlisle during the winter for a season of social gaiety and intercourse, and on one of these occasions Susanna and her sister, who was a noted Cumberland beauty, met Miss Catherine Gilpin of Scaleby Castle, who chanced to obtain lodgings in the same house. Miss Gilpin also was a poetess. She belonged to an ancient Cumbrian family noted for both mental and physical grit. It was her father who was commander of Carlisle Castle in "the year forty-five," and who was compelled to surrender it to Prince Charlie and his Highlanders.

Miss Gilpin's poetic gift was of a vigorous order. She wrote a ballad on Trafalgar, and she collaborated with Susanna Blamire in writing a whimsical song, still popular in Cumberland, called "The Cumberland Scold."

It will be seen at a glance how congenial this friendship between two ladies of kindred gifts and sympathies must have been, and, indeed, the bulk of the very moderate pleasures of Susanna's already declining life came to her through her

friendship with Miss Gilpin. To Susanna's fragile and sensitive nature this strong, protecting friendship was in truth "a sheltering tree."

She found, too,—what is by no means an unusual effect of the friendship of affinities—that her slender gift of poetry became more vigorous and blossomed anew under the cordial influence of approval. Some of her best—or rather of her least prosaic—verses were addressed to her friend, notably one really beautiful song, called "Turn thee round, Wheelie!"

When Susanna was about twenty years old her lovely sister Sarah was married to a Scotch laird—Colonel Graham of Gartmore—and she accompanied the newly-wedded pair to their home in the Highlands of Scotland in the vicinity of Aberfoyle. Colonel and Mrs. Graham enjoyed but a brief period of married life. He died six years after the marriage, and as there were no children his young widow had to leave her Scottish home and retire with her sister once more to the old Cumbrian farmhouse of Thackwood Nook.

It was while Susanna Blamire resided in Scotland

that she wrote the best of her lyrics. Her poetic vein, though undoubtedly of pure gold, was very thin. It was, in fact, in a great measure the mere effervescence of clever youth that caused her to rhyme; and in the case of her more lastingly sterling love-songs she sought a natural refuge from otherwise distracting emotions by weaving her feelings into musical words.

Regarding her lengthy and forgotten poem of 1150 lines, called "Stoklewath, or the Cumbrian Village," it is to be hoped that she found more satisfaction in writing it than the student of her work will find in perusing it. It is almost unbroken doggerel, and it has an irritating suggestion throughout of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village." Moreover, the commonplace couplets strike upon the ear with *staccato* effect.

But Susanna Blamire was at her best in song-writing, and she unquestionably possessed the lyric gift.

At the comparatively early age of forty-seven the candle of life, which for long had flickered fitfully in that fragile frame, was silently extinguished. She, like another child of genius of



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more recent years, “came to an end of her power of living.” She died at Carlisle on April 6, 1794, and was buried at Raughton Head—the village whither she had gone to school. She lies under the shadow of Helvellyn amid the scenery she had loved and sung.

### YE SHALL WALK IN SILK ATTIRE

And ye shall walk in silk attire  
And siller hae to spare,  
Gin ye'll consent to be his bride  
Nor think o' Donald mair.

Oh, wha wad buy a silken gown  
Wi' a puir broken heart ?  
Or what's to me a siller crown  
Gin frae my love I part ?

The mind wha's every wish is pure  
Far dearer is to me ;  
And ere I'm forced to break my faith  
I'll lay me doon and dee !

For I hae pledged my virgin troth  
Brave Donald's fate to share ;  
And he has gi'en to me his heart  
Wi' a' its virtues rare.

His gentle manners won my heart ;—  
He gratefu' took the gift ;  
Could I but think to tak' it back  
It would be waur than theft !

For langest life can ne'er repay  
The love he bears to me ;  
And ere I'm forced to break my troth  
I'll lay me doon and dee.

## CHAPTER VI

SINGERS OF HEATHER AND HEARTH: JEAN  
GLOVER AND ELIZABETH HAMILTON

JEAN GLOVER is well entitled to a place in the group of Scottish songstresses by right of her only song, "Comin' through the Craigs o' Kyle," a lilt of the open air, breathing of the freedom of the moors in all their splendour of "bonnie blooming heather."

Very little is known of her, and that little not much to her credit. It is with strong regret that we find Burns, that large-hearted bard who pleaded:—

"At the balance let's be mute,  
We never can adjust it,"

stigmatising the singer of the pure and strong song of Kyle in language particularly coarse and uncharitable. While preserving her song, he at the same time stamped her character with an indelible brand of bad notoriety. He adds, "I

took the song down from her own singing, as she was strolling through the country with a sleight-of-hand blackguard."

Jean Glover was the daughter of a Kilmarnock weaver, and was born in a house in the High Street of that town on October 31, 1758. In her time—which was also that of Burns—that quaint High Street, which once had rung with the feuds of the powerful hostile families of the Boyds of Dean Castle and of the Montgomeries of Eglington, was converted into a colony of weavers, shoemakers, and bonnet-makers, and any locality more uncongenial for the housing of such a free, wild spirit as Jean Glover possessed could hardly be imagined.

The "Weavers' Raw" was the headquarters of the "unco guid," denounced so scathingly by Burns; and Jean Glover, by a freak of heredity or perhaps a reactionary impulse of fate, was born a member not only of a sternly and narrowly religious household but also of a race peculiarly tenacious and austere in religious matters and of a Christian sect, the direct and not far distant descendants of the Covenanters who had made their native Ayrshire moors a

world-famous battlefield "for Christ and Covenants"—a battlefield so bloody that, in the eyes of their descendants, the heather on those sacred moors seemed to glow with a deeper than natural hue, which was in truth the blood of the martyrs crying from the ground.

To this community of godly weavers, prone to read sermons, to argue on abstruse points of doctrine, to catechise the youthful members of their families, came laughing, handsome, reckless Jean Glover with her thwarted poetic tendency and passionate heart of love. And the upshot was disaster. Probably Jean's pranks would give a naughty zest to the monotony of daily work and incessant sermonising, and there would be much shaking of heads over her "royd" and unregenerate ways. She may, by some, even have been considered the scapegoat of the chosen community, and no doubt the high-spirited, wilful Jean would do her best to earn the opprobrious names flung after her as she passed with other daring young "brands" along the High Street to seek an idle hour's "daffing" among the ruins of Dean Castle.

Freedom to Jean was more than respectability,

and she only jeered as she poised her dancing feet on the rocking stones that spanned the swift-flowing Irvine water, and crossed Riccarton Brig to wander on the moors of Kyle, stretching in impressive freedom to the feet of the hills of Craigie—a scene which was yet to be embodied in her song:—

“Comin’ through the Craigs o’ Kyle,  
 Among the bonnie blooming heather,  
 There I met a bonnie lassie  
 Keepin’ a’ her ewes thegither.  
 Ower the muir among the heather,  
 Ower the muir among the heather,—  
 There I met a bonnie lassie  
 Keepin’ a’ her ewes thegither !”

The free rhythm of this song, with its careless abandon and audacious repetition of phrase, reminds us of Browning’s “wise thrush”

“Who sings each song twice over,  
 Lest you should think he never could recapture  
 The first fine careless rapture.”

It was at one of the Kilmarnock fairs that Jean Glover met the “sleight-of-hand blackguard” with whom she left her native town and for whose sake she “counted the world well lost.”

He was a strolling player and juggler, and went from fair to fair in pursuit of his calling. Little more is known of him than that he was named Richard or Richie, and that he had once been a sergeant in the army. Jean's meeting with him took place in 1790 when she was thirty-two years old—an age, one would have thought, beyond such a rash impulse of impetuous love. But Jean was very sprightly and beautiful—in a dusky, gipsy fashion—and was besides a good singer and, therefore, an acquisition to the wandering troupe of which Richie was chief. In a book called “The Ayrshire Contemporaries of Burns,” is given the testimony of an old woman who remembered having seen Jean at a fair in Irvine, gaudily attired and playing on a tambourine at the mouth of a close in which was situated Richie's exhibition room, and this old woman emphatically asserts that Jean was “the brawest woman that ever stepped in leather shoon!”

We gather that she frequently sang her own song, and we can imagine with what *verve* she would carol

“Ower the muir amang the heather,  
Ower the muir amang the heather!”



to the wild clash and jingle of her be-ribboned tambourine.

Jean Glover and her strolling juggler trudged from fair to fair throughout the West Country, often as far as Glasgow, visiting every little hamlet that nestled amid the wide Ayrshire moors,—happy enough, doubtless, in their haphazard fashion, when

“Warm and sunny was the weather”

and Jean, light-hearted and strong yet awhile, sang her song of Kyle to the humming of the moss-bees busy in the heather. But often enough the strollers would be footsore and weary and “down in their luck,” and would stumble morosely along the rough pack-horse tracks, which were the only roads that Ayrshire could boast of in those days. Many a lonely cluster of cottar houses, many a solitary farm-steading would they pass, and happy would the vagrants deem themselves if they chanced to find the “guidwife” friendly and “routh o’ bannocks and milk,” and perhaps a glass of the “barley-bree” set before them in exchange for an evening’s entertainment to the farmer and his servants in the hay-scented barn.

The pair must sometimes have passed the lonely

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farmhouse of Lochgoin where, after his day's work, the author of "The Scots Worthies" sat writing the biographies of the martyrs by the light of the friendly peat-fire. But Jean Glover, the reprobate and wicked "gangrel" would give the house of the good, stern Howie a wide berth, preferring even the stinging moorland storms to the lash of the righteous man's tongue.

Eleven years of this wandering career were all that Jean Glover was capable of enduring, and the poor stumbler on life's rough ways sank to her rest at the early age of forty-two.

She died in 1801 at Letterkenny in Ireland, far away from the Craigs of Kyle and the bonnie blooming heather whose fragrance she has embalmed in her song.

### OWER THE MUIR AMANG THE HEATHER

Comin' through the Craigs o' Kyle,  
Amang the bonnie blooming heather,—  
There I met a bonnie lassie,  
Keepin' a' her ewes thegither.  
Ower the muir amang the heather,  
Ower the muir amang the heather,—  
There I met a bonnie lassie  
Keepin' a' her ewes thegither.

Says I, My dear, where is your hame,  
 In muir or dale, pray tell me whether ?  
 She said, I tent the fleecy flocks  
 That feed amang the blooming heather.  
 Ower the muir amang the heather, &c.

We sat us doon upon a bank,  
 Sae warm and sunny was the weather :  
 She left her flocks at large to rove  
 Amang the bonnie blooming heather.  
 Ower the muir amang the heather, &c.

While thus we sat she sang a sang—  
 Till echo rang a mile and farther ;  
 And aye the burden o' the sang  
 Was, Ower the muir amang the heather.  
 Ower the muir amang the heather, &c.

She charmed my heart, and aye sin' syne,  
 I couldna think on ony ither :  
 By sea and sky she shall be mine—  
 The bonnie lass amang the heather !  
 Ower the muir amang the heather, &c.

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Elizabeth Hamilton—yet another singer of one song, the favourite song of the Scottish hearth, “My Ain Fireside”—though born in Belfast was of Scottish descent and rearing. She was born in the same year as Jean Glover—in 1758—and her father, a struggling merchant, rich in nothing save good

birth and a University education, died when she, his youngest child, was but a year old, leaving his widow and three children in reduced circumstances.

As a means of lightening her mother's burden, Elizabeth, at the age of six, was sent to reside permanently with her paternal aunt, Mrs. Marshall, a lady who, to escape the mortifications attendant on the position of a poor and proud "companion" to a relative of rank, had married a wealthy peasant-born farmer—a man so honourable and worthy that Elizabeth Hamilton, whom he welcomed to his childless home, declared, in the words of Burns, that "he held his patent of nobility direct from Almighty God."

Elizabeth received her education at a school in the town of Stirling, and, because her home was at an inconvenient distance, she remained in town during the week, returning to the farmhouse on Saturday to an even stricter discipline than was her lot at school.

She grew up into a staid and somewhat priggish maiden and, from being much in the society of older people than herself, she developed an "old-fashioned" and pedantic style of speech that was very amusing to visitors. She was a great reader, instinctively

seeking food for her growing intelligence in the books that lay to her hand:—the book of Blind Harry, the minstrel of “Wallace,” and the poems of Barbour, who sang of Robert the Bruce, adoring these Scottish heroes all the more because every day her eye dwelt on the plains of Bannockburn and the battlefield of Stirling Bridge, seen from a favourite nook in the wall of the high-perched Castle.

She was sent to Edinburgh to “finish” her education, and thereafter she returned home and occupied the position of adopted daughter in the pretty cottage called Ingram’s Crook, to which Mr. and Mrs. Marshall had retired from the farm.

The girl’s life was very lonely and monotonous. She had a superabundance of leisure, which she devoted to reading and to incessant scribbling.

She was of a very inquiring and acquisitive disposition, and she continued her studies, getting beyond her depth occasionally for lack of judicious guidance and even, like “Aurora Leigh,”

“Brushing with extreme flounce  
The circle of the sciences;”

also sinking for a time into the intellectual quagmire of religious doubt and, with the usual arrogance

of clever youth, making her moan of a world "out of joint."

Out of this chaotic fermentation was by-and-by to emerge the orderly cosmos of a mind gifted with the rare powers of a reformer and an educationist. She, like Susanna Blamire, received the fiery baptism of disappointed love. The rose-bowered gate at lonely Ingram's Crook had its romance of stolen meetings and of vows of everlasting fidelity, and it witnessed the departure of the unknown suitor who "loved and rode away." It was characteristic of Elizabeth Hamilton's proud and sensitive nature that this episode remained a secret even from her most intimate friends. While she was experiencing the first bitterness of her grief for her lost love, one of these friends, deceived by her armour of smiles and laughter, spoke of her as "a creature who could never be wae."

In her young womanhood she must have been singularly attractive with her brown ringlets shading her beautiful brow, her bright yet dreamy eyes, her charming smile.

After her aunt's death Elizabeth continued to reside with her kind guardian, Mr. Marshall, until his death. It was a dull existence, but it was clearly

one of duty in her eyes, for she never ceased to be grateful for his kindness to her solitary childhood.

She left Ingram's Crook at last to keep house for her only brother, Charles, a talented man who occupied an important position in the navy and was the author of a book on the Rohilla war. He had been granted five years' home-leave to enable him to undertake the arduous task of translating from the Persian the code of Mussulman laws, and the brother and sister settled in London together. Not for long did this pleasant companionship continue. The gifted Charles Hamilton died without completing his task, leaving Elizabeth to mourn his loss in the pathetic words, "with him died my last hopes of earthly happiness."

She did not dream that the laurel of fame awaited her farther down the road of life. Her literary activity became greater after her brother's death. Doubtless she tried to find in her pen solace for an otherwise empty life.

Her brother had often urged her to preserve in writing her many wise and poetic ideas. She took up this task after his death, and in quick succession from her pen came miscellaneous articles on education, and also poems and novels. Her still popular



novel, "The Cottagers of Glenburnie," was published in 1808 when she was fifty years of age.

This "novel with a purpose" has done as much to improve the domestic conditions of rural life in Scotland as the immortal "Uncle Tom's Cabin" did for the emancipation of the slaves of America. Elizabeth Hamilton's kindly yet scathing exposure of the evils of "dirt" and of what has been well called "The *vis inertia* of 'I canna be fashed,'" was too uncompromising to be ignored and, after a momentary natural resentment, the Scottish peasantry turned their attention to much-needed reformation in sanitary matters. In Scotland, or at least in Fife, fifty years ago if a capable mother desired to shame her daughter into daintier personal habits she flung at her the scornful gibe, "You are a perfect Mrs. Maclarty!"

Elizabeth Hamilton now took up her abode in Edinburgh along with her widowed sister—the only one of her kith and kin left to rejoice with her in the autumn of her fame. In that city, in spite of a life of much bodily suffering, she continued to write, more particularly on educational subjects. She received a pension from Government in acknowledgment of her services in the cause of

education and practical reform, and she passed some quietly pleasant years among friends of kindred philanthropic and religious views.

She died at Harrogate, having gone thither in quest of health, when she was fifty-eight years of age.

Her beautiful lyric in praise of the joys of the hearth was written in the first flush of the pleasure of returning to the quiet independence of her own home after an absence of six months, during which she had taken charge of the motherless family of a nobleman.

While she sat by her solitary "old maid's" fireside and sang its quiet joys, with visions in the background only of strenuous and lonely mental exertion made more difficult by infirm health, she did not know that she was weaving a golden cord of loving kinship with Scottish folk all the world over. No Scottish heart fails to thrill at the memories of home which her song evokes. Its sentiment touches them to the quick, especially if they are aliens from their native Scotland and it is sung in a foreign land. Scottish dwellers in lands of ice or in lands of fire; emigrants toiling in the wild valleys of Klondyke, in the Australian bush, in the

malarial swamps of Africa; sailors tossing on the sea and soldiers bivouacked on distant battle-fields hail with swelling hearts the words of their country-woman's song of the hearth:—

“Of a' roads to happiness ever were tried  
 There's nane half sae sure as my ain fireside!  
 My ain fireside, my ain fireside!  
 Oh, there's nocht to compare wi' my ain fireside!”

### MY AIN FIRESIDE

Oh, I hae seen great anes and sat in famed ha's,  
 'Mong lords and 'mong ladies a' covered wi' braws;  
 At feasts made for princes, wi' princes I've been,  
 Where the grand shine o' splendour has dazzled my een;  
 But a sight so delightfu' I trow I ne'er spied,  
 As the bonnie, blythe blink o' my ain fireside,  
 O' my ain fireside, o' my ain fireside!  
 Oh, cheery's the blink o' my ain fireside!  
 My ain fireside, my ain fireside!  
 Oh, there's nocht to compare wi' my ain fireside.

Ance mair—Gude be praised!—round my ain heartsome ingle,  
 Wi' the friends o' my youth I cordially mingle;  
 Nae forms to compel me to seem wae or glad,  
 I may laugh when I'm merry and sigh when I'm sad.  
 Nae falsehood to dread and nae malice to fear,  
 But truth to delight me and friendship to cheer;  
 Of a' roads to happiness ever were tried  
 There's nane half sae sure as my ain fireside!  
 My ain fireside, my ain fireside!  
 Oh, there's nocht to compare wi' my ain fireside!

## 84 SPINDLE-SIDE OF SCOTTISH SONG

When I draw in my stool to my cosy hearthstane,  
 My heart louns sae licht I scarce ken't for my ain ;  
 Care's doon on the wind, it is clean oot o' sight ;  
 Past troubles they seem but as dreams o' the night.  
 For here are kind voices, kind faces I see,  
 And mark sweet affection glint fond frae ilk e'e ;  
 Nae fleechings o' flattery, nae boastings o' pride,  
 'Tis heart speaks to heart, at my ain fireside !  
     My ain fireside, my ain fireside !  
     Oh, there's nocht to compare wi' my ain fireside.





LADY LINDSAY

*From a Portrait in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery*

## CHAPTER VII

### LADY ANNE LINDSAY: THE SONGSTRESS *INCOGNITA*

BETWEEN the spacious crescent of Largo Bay in Fifeshire and the massive foreland of Kincaig Point thrusting forth its gaunt pinnacles of basalt into the North Sea, there clusters a pictorial group of sea-board villages, each having "a name to conjure with"—Largo, romantic with memories of the wayward boyhood of Alexander Selkirk, the prototype of Robinson Crusoe, and with tales of the derring-do of the bluff admiral Sir Andrew Wood, skipper of the invincible *Yellow Carvel*; Elie and Earlsferry, long beloved of golfers; and bleak St. Monans, visited by the saltiest winds that blow.

Within this magic circle, but creeping inland, lie a couple of pastoral hamlets—Colinsburgh and Kinneuchar—each the centre whence radiates many a fertile farm. A few lochs gleam dimly out of



the prevailing grey *haar*; a few church spires suggest other-worldliness with somewhat inartistic brevity; and the ruins of several historic castles dot the landscape to east and west.

Higher yet, ascending the southern slope towards the verdant crest of Fife, stand the country-seats of the gentry. They retire behind their ancestral trees with a certain stately aloofness, as if in a proud consciousness that they are the outward symbols of Fife's classic "fringe of gold"; and behind them rise the various eminences which the county dignifies with the name of hills—Largo Law with its cloven crown; Kellie Law, the mist-compeller; and the weird tumulus of Norrie's Law guarding its legend of buried silver armour. Across the sea stand the sentinels of the Forth—Inchkeith, the Isle of May,

"North Berwick with its cone of green,  
And Bass amid the waters."

In the very heart of this scene of natural and historic interest are the mansion and estate of Balcarres, the Fife home of the Earl of Crawford, chief of the clan Lindsay—a race whose nobles, especially in the stormy dawn of feudal Scotland,

did more than almost any other to mould the destinies of the nation ;—a race, too, equally at home with sword and pen. One can vaguely guess the extent of their power from the number of their ruined castles which stud the county of Fife alone ; but, indeed, these decayed strongholds of the Lindsays are scattered over broad Scotland.

“The knights are dust,  
Their swords are rust,”

and the chief interest investing Balcarres House lies in the fact that Lady Anne Lindsay, the songstress of “Auld Robin Gray,” was born there.

Perhaps there is not in all the annals of Fife’s eminent sons a more interesting personality than that of her father, James, fifth Earl of Balcarres.

He was dragged into the Jacobite Rebellion by his father, Earl Colin, whom he vainly endeavoured to dissuade from taking any part in a movement which his shrewder judgment pronounced doomed to failure. Earl James was at that time a naval officer of brilliant promise and with every prospect of promotion ; but the fortunes of the father and son were wrecked in the Rebellion, and although both were ultimately and grudg-

ingly pardoned, their prospects of professional preferment were blasted, their estates almost fatally crippled by Jacobite debt, and Earl Colin practically a prisoner, being under *surveillance* in his own house of Balcarres, where he died.

Earl James was already an old man when he succeeded to the title. His health was shattered, his ambitions overthrown, when at last he stood on his lonely hearth, chief of his clan but the last of his race.

Thirty years of loyal fighting for King George in the Low Countries were more than sufficient atonement, one would have thought, for his unwilling participation in the Rebellion of 1715. But George I. was not magnanimous enough to reward these thirty years of service with promotion in the army. He declared to one who had approached him on behalf of Earl James that no one who had drawn his sword in the Stuart cause should ever rise to command in the British army. Earl James, therefore, left the king's service and retired to Balcarres, as his father had done before him—

“An old man broken with the storms of State.”

Yet in that empty moment when he stood solitary on his hearth he was, unaware, on the threshold of a new life. A second spring-time of temperate joy was before him;—in the near future a fair young bride awaited him, and many children's voices were yet to chase the silence from old Balcarres.

But these “coming events” cast no “shadow before,” and Earl James prepared to live the life of a recluse and to vary the study of his favourite book, Montaigne's *Essays*, by becoming a notable Fife farmer, thus turning his sword into a sickle.

But in spite of literary and agricultural pursuits, Earl James found time hang heavily on his hands. He tired of the society of the neighbouring lairds, with whom he was prone to differ in argument and thereupon to display a heat of temper which he afterwards deplored; and thus it came about that when the good Earl was not inveighing against the “base” Union of the Parliaments, or abusing Queen Elizabeth, or lamenting the woes of Queen Mary, he found life intolerably dull.

He sought distraction by journeying to Moffat, then a fashionable health resort. There he “met his fate” in Miss Dalrymple, daughter of Sir

Robert Dalrymple of Castleton, who, with her widowed mother, was undergoing the fashionable "cure" of drinking the waters.

The story of the Earl's courtship, as told by his witty daughter, Lady Anne, is extremely curious. Earl James was nearly sixty years old when he fell in love at first sight with the youth, beauty, and *embonpoint* of Miss Dalrymple.

He met her at the house of a mutual friend. When he entered the room his hostess jocularly waved her hand towards a group of young ladies, saying, "Here is choice for you, my lord!" He glanced keenly into each laughing face and, to Miss Dalrymple's astonishment and dismay, laid his hand upon her shoulder, saying earnestly, "I fix here!"

According to Lady Anne, her father must have seemed an *outré* lover in young eyes. In the first place, he was old and, besides, it would seem that he looked undeniably eccentric; for, though he was the last representative of the ancient Scottish nobility, though his aspect was noble and his manners the quintessence of chivalry, he was lank and he was deaf and the style of his apparel was disconcerting to fashionable tastes. He wore an

unfashionable brigadier wig with three long tails, to which he had added a few carelessly straying ringlets not contemplated in the wig-maker's design. Moreover, his commodious shoes were slashed in divers places by a penknife to afford more room for his gouty toes. Certainly the native dignity of the man must have been great since, in spite of this eccentric exterior, he did not appear ridiculous in the world's critical eyes. But in the light of a wooer, Miss Dalrymple shrank from him and rejected his formally-offered addresses. It was certainly a far cry from her sunny height of twenty-two to the Earl's twilight vale of sixty.

The brave gentleman, who had borne the wreck of his worldly ambitions with comparative philosophy, could not endure the pangs of unrequited love. He fell sick and, thinking he was shortly to die, made a quixotic will, leaving Miss Dalrymple the half of his fortune. Hearing of her lover's generosity, the lady relented and, in an impulse of that pity which is "akin to love," she agreed to marry him. But her heart was never captured and, although she became a capable and energetic wife, her nature remained unripened and

somewhat harsh until, in extreme old age, when her children's fortunes and misfortunes had softened her spirit, she mellowed out of season like a winter pear.

Of the eleven children of this strangely-mated couple Lady Anne Lindsay was the eldest. She was born on December 1, 1750.

Of all his children she seems to have most resembled Earl James, who found in her a peculiarly congenial companion.

One of her earliest recollections is worth recording. It had occurred to Earl James that a fitting task for his peaceful declining years would be the compilation of the memoirs of some of the more illustrious members of his race and family, and he proceeded to collect material for the "Lives of the Lindsays." Lady Anne, who was her father's constant companion, remembers seeing the Earl receive a large bundle of dirty papers wrapped in a tartan plaid from the old Laird of Macfarlane—"the ugliest chieftain with the reddest nose" that the child had ever seen. She was told that the old laird was a famous antiquarian and had obtained possession of many venerable documents relating to the history of the Lindsays; and she used to sit



for hours beside the two old gentlemen, while her father busied himself with his pen and rewarded her patience from time to time with a few sugared plums from "the children's drawer," which the kind father kept well stored in his study.

This would seem to have been the beginning of that most inspiring of all human affections—a literary *cameraderie* between father and daughter of kindred minds, and we are not surprised to learn that Earl James bequeathed to Lady Anne the task of continuing the family memoirs. Her contribution to the "Lives of the Lindsays" reads like a romance and overflows with wit and poetic imagination.

The education of the Balcarres children was conducted on original lines. The Earl's influence in this matter was paramount. His young wife's domestic discipline was, in his estimation, at times too vigorous and unyielding, and occasionally he protested that she would break the spirits of his "young troop," as he delighted to call his children. His patient training of their minds did much to influence their future, while his unfettered judgments of men and books and the lessons he inculcated on what constituted true

nobility of character were of the first importance to his children.

An absent-minded and erudite tutor superintended the formal studies of the school-room, and the young ladies were instructed in needlework and feminine accomplishments by a certain Miss Cumming who strenuously objected to being called their governess, preferring to be looked upon as "a friend of the family." The energetic young Countess had "discovered" Miss Cumming in Edinburgh, where she occupied a cheap apartment and painted butterflies and sewed lace ruffles for a livelihood. She was invited to Balcarres by the Countess, who saw that the entertaining little lady would help to amuse the Earl and teach the children.

Unfortunately for Lady Anne, Miss Cumming conceived an aversion to her on account of her frank preference for another and even more eccentric retainer of the family. This was Miss Sophia Johnstone, commonly called "Suff," a relative of Lady Balcarres, whom that lady, when a bride, had invited to pay a visit of a few months to Balcarres. These months waxed elastic and became years, and finally "Suff" established herself as a fixture,

proving a most invaluable "mother's help" in the rapidly filling nursery at old Balcarres. She affected mannish pursuits and wore a modified form of masculine attire. Her favourite occupation was the manufacture of shoes for Earl James's farm-horses, for which purpose she had a small forge fitted up at Balcarres. Her memory was a marvellous repository of old Scots ballads, which she sang in a rough man's voice to the clang of her forge. She was a fascinating nurse for the song-loving Lady Anne, and it was to enshrine a beautiful old melody sung by "Suff Johnstone" to the words of a ballad which was more vigorous than refined and which was called "The Bridegroom greets when the sun gangs doon," that the immortal ballad of "Auld Robin Gray" was written.

The children of Balcarres were a lively band, and on one memorable occasion they rebelled against home discipline and arranged to run away! Earl James and his energetic Countess were one day sunning themselves on the lawn in front of the old grey house, and the drowse of a summer noon pervaded the sunlit gardens. Perhaps the Earl was reading to his wife his first and last attempt

at verse-making, inspired by his love and by the new poem, Thomson's "Seasons." Fondly he calls her

"The harmoniser of my latter days  
Who brings forth faculties before unknown."

The Countess listens with an abstracted smile. There is a pucker of anxiety between her bright eyes; she is beginning to suspect that the children romping somewhere in the park behind the trees are ominously quiet. She glances apprehensively towards the perilous slopes of Balcarres Craig with various memories of former reckless pranks crowding upon her, but she sees only the figure of the abstracted-looking tutor mooning away his hour of leisure and the prim little governess sitting on a garden chair sewing lace ruffles for the Earl.

Where, then, were the children? A round half-dozen of them were out of bounds—rebels and runaways! For mother's rules were too stringent, there were too many lessons, there was too little play, there was a delightful house in Elie down by the sea, and a kind lady lived there who was fond of children! They knew that, because they had been sent there to recover from whooping-

cough. How delighted she would be to see them all again! Only three miles to run and they would be out of mother's reach!

So they began their walk with enthusiasm, but the dogs insisted on accompanying them, and little James, just beginning to toddle about, had to be carried by each in turn, and so their progress was slow.

What a quaint picture they must have made, stealing through the avenues and down by the long rampart of the Dane's Dyke leading to Elie! The boys marched in front with the dogs acting as scouts. It was an exciting march and much better than sitting in the stuffy school-room; but gradually the ladies Anne and Margaret lagged behind, encumbered by the weight of their tiny, weeping brother and also by their gowns, which were better fitted for a masquerade than for a scramble in the shadow of a Fife "dry-stane dyke"; for their mother, devoid of sentiment and bent on economy, had turned her wedding-gown into frocks for them—frocks of yellow silk and silver flowers eked out by flounces of blue gauze!

But Nemesis was nearer than the runaways

knew. The Earl and the Countess, pacing the sunny terrace, were startled to see a usually most sedate figure panting quickly up the steep approach towards them. It was that of the old shepherd of the estate with his dog at his heels. Mark the "delicate omen traced in air"—his name was *Robin Gray*. "All the young gentlemen and the young ladies and all the dogs are run away, my lady!" cried he. All was commotion. A messenger was despatched to bring the rebels ignominiously home, and in a short time there was a sound of youthful lamentation at Balcarres, for the Countess was teaching her lively rebels to stay at home by a liberal chastisement from her own firm white hand.

The children of Balcarres occasionally spent a winter in Edinburgh—the older members to enjoy the delights of the play or of the assembly, the younger to attend classes and receive the comprehensive education on which the Earl had set his heart. He did not live very long to superintend the education of his "young troop";—it was impossible that the aged father should live beyond their dawning manhood and womanhood, and the knowledge that this was inevitable must often have

saddened him. He died when Lady Anne was only seventeen years old.

Every one knows, in one form or other, the pretty story of how Lady Anne wrote "Auld Robin Gray." The song was written in 1771 when she was in her twenty-first year. Her beautiful younger sister, Lady Margaret, had recently married and gone with her husband to reside in England and Lady Anne felt melancholy without her lifelong companion. She therefore endeavoured to occupy her lonely days by scribbling "on the backs of old letters" in the seclusion of her little turret-chamber which overlooked the Firth.

With a spice of playful malice which was characteristic of her, Lady Anne took a poetical revenge upon the old herd of Balcarres who had arrested the runaway children in their flight from home, by seizing upon his name and making it that of the "auld guidman" of her dutiful heroine Jeanie.

While she was engaged in writing the ballad, her little sister Elizabeth, twelve years her junior, entered the room. "I have been writing a ballad, my dear," said Lady Anne; "I am oppressing my heroine with many misfortunes; I have already sent her Jamie to sea, and broken her father's arm,



and made her mother fall sick, and given her auld Robin Gray for a lover, but I want to load her with a fifth sorrow in the four lines, poor thing !—Help me to one, I pray ?”

“Steal the cow, sister Anne,” promptly replied Lady Elizabeth. This was done, and the ballad completed.

It at once became a favourite at Balcarres, but Lady Anne bound to secrecy all those who knew that she was the authoress. In those days women were insistently taught that all intellectual effort was unbecoming to their sex and that to go the length of publishing was to lose caste and to be dubbed “blue-stocking.” Lady Anne acknowledges that she had a deep dread of being accounted literary ; moreover her remarkably chivalrous disposition prompted her to keep her secret, “perceiving the shyness it created in those who could write nothing.”

She did not guess how irksome that secret of hers was by-and-by to become. The fame of her ballad spread far and near ; it was sung beside every Scottish fireside, in every field, at every country fair. It was carried into England by ballad-mongers and strolling players, and one significant proof of its

rapid popularity is evinced by the fact that Susanna Blamire, writing about that time her lengthy poem on a Cumbrian village, puts the song into the mouth of the village milkmaid :—

“At the last fair she caught yon warbling lay,  
And now the woods repeat ‘Auld Robin Gray.’”

The authorship of the ballad actually became a question of ascription as between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. It was argued that “Auld Robin Gray” was either an ancient ballad composed, perhaps, by Rizzio or “a mere song of yesterday.” But some darkling whispers of the authorship crept out, and the name of Lady Anne Lindsay was universally associated with it. To her mother alone she showed the first-written copy of the ballad; but on one occasion, at Dalkeith Palace, she herself sang it in such an exquisitely sympathetic manner that Lady Scott divined the authorship and taxed Lady Anne with it, whereupon the latter blushed and denied it so awkwardly that the shrewd hostess was confirmed in her suspicion and declared that she would betray Lady Anne unless she bribed her with a copy! And thus it crept into the knowledge of many that

it was Lady Anne Lindsay who had written "Auld Robin Gray," though she persisted in refusing to acknowledge it.

She was indeed persecuted to divulge the truth, but pique and a growing sense of annoyance hardened her into stubbornness.

The secretary of an antiquarian society clumsily attempted to cajole her into confession, but he only succeeded in rousing the usually placid and kind Lady Anne into a haughty and scornful temper, which entirely discomfited him. A reward of twenty guineas was offered to any one who proved the authorship of the song; it was set to a new tune of great pathos and beauty—its present melody—by a musical doctor, the Rev. William Leeves, rector of Wrington, Somerset; it supplied, its writer averred, a subject for a play, a pantomime, an opera, and a romance; it was claimed by others, a sorry scribbler wrote a sequel to it, and it was translated into French; it was printed in every Scottish anthology, and great authorities, like Ritson, Allan Cunningham, and Sir Walter Scott eulogised it, the last wreaking upon it the most lavish and enthusiastic national pride; the hat of the fashionable hour was dubbed "The Auld Robin Gray

hat"; and Lady Anne, while visiting some relatives in Edinburgh, had an hour's genuine amusement in witnessing from her window an exhibition of the courtship of Auld Robin Gray performed by dancing dogs!

Such, briefly, is the history of the first part of the ballad and, except in the case of Lady Nairne's "The Land o' the Leal," never, perhaps, has such a *furor* of interest been excited over a Scots song.

As for the second part—which has shared the usual fate of sequels and is not popularly known—it was written many years later to please her aged mother, who wished to know "how that unlucky business of Jamie and Jeanie ended."

Although there are some quite uniquely beautiful verses in this sequel and the evidences of a hand having great facility in the portrayal of Scottish character, Lady Anne herself owns that it falls short of the first part; and she repeats that her dread of being considered a poetess was still so intense that, although she frequently delighted her mother by singing it to her, on this occasion she neither gave nor showed her any written copy. It is all the more touching to find that the affection of the aged Countess triumphed

over her failing memory so far as to enable her to remember and frequently to recite these unwritten verses, exulting in the knowledge that she was the only person who could repeat the sequel to "Auld Robin Gray."

It is probable that the reason why the sequel has never attained the popularity of the first part of the ballad lies in the simple fact that, in the first part, the "tale of virtuous distress in humble life" which Lady Anne Lindsay set herself to write, was rounded and complete; and the hankering of her mother to know the upshot of the affair was, doubtless, rooted in a common enough desire among the aged to have all sorrowful tales come to a happy conclusion. The vigorous young Countess of the long past years at Balcarres, who punished her children in Spartan fashion to "fit them for the hardships of life," would not have wished any other ending than that contained in the noble verse which concludes the first part of the song:—

"I gang like a ghaist and I carena much to spin,  
I daurna think o' Jamie, for that would be a sin;  
But I'll dae my best a guid wife to be,  
For auld Robin Gray he is kind to me."

There is one thing, however, for which we are supremely indebted to the sequel. Curiously enough, it led to the confession by Lady Anne Lindsay that she was the author of “Auld Robin Gray.”

In 1823, when the then anonymous author of “Waverley” had just published “The Pirate,” Lady Anne, like the rest of the reading world, obtained this new book by the Great Unknown, whose secret, like her own, was “half revealed and half concealed.”

In the course of the story Sir Walter Scott compares the condition of the gentle Minna to that of Jeanie, the hapless wife of Auld Robin Gray—or, to use his own words—“the village heroine of Lady Anne Lindsay’s beautiful ballad:”—

“Nae langer she wept, her tears were a’ spent ;  
Despair it was come and she thocht it content,—  
She thocht it content, but her cheek was grown pale,  
And she drooped like a snaw-drap broke doon by the hail.”

These lines occur in the sequel to the ballad. Lady Anne Lindsay was delighted with this delicate compliment, but she was puzzled to know on what grounds Sir Walter thus authoritatively attributed the ballad to her.

Yielding to an impulse of gratitude and pleasure, she wrote thanking Sir Walter for the compliment he had paid her, and asked his authority for the statement contained in it, confiding to him at the same time the entire history of the ballad. She had kept silence regarding her authorship of it for more than half a century.

An interesting correspondence ensued, in the course of which Sir Walter Scott gave a satisfactory account of how he had discovered that Lady Anne was the writer of "Auld Robin Gray." He urged her to allow him to send a complete copy with notes relating to its history to the *Bannatyne Club*, a society for preserving floating records of Scottish history and literature. To this generous proposal Lady Anne willingly assented, and she gave him "the only copies of the ballad ever given under the hand of the author." The ballad was at once printed in a thin quarto volume and circulated among the members of the club, thus setting the vexed question of the authorship of "Auld Robin Gray" finally at rest. This was in 1824, just a year before Lady Anne Lindsay died, aged seventy-five.

There is at Balcarres House an interesting



portrait of Lady Anne executed by herself in black and white, and presented by her to her favourite brother Charles, Bishop of Kildare, on the occasion of her marriage to Mr. Barnard, the son of the Bishop of Limerick, whom she married somewhat late in life and accompanied to the Cape of Good Hope on his appointment as Colonial Secretary to Lord Macartney, the first British Governor of the Cape. The portrait shows Lady Anne in ripe middle age. It conveys the impression of a gay and vivacious personality. A quantity of curling fair hair encircles a frank face, the eyes are vividly intelligent, the smiling mouth extremely arch and winning; yet the countenance falls short of beauty, possibly because of its healthful fulness of outline. A simple white drapery is arranged about the buxom figure, and over one arm hangs a silken tartan plaid—the Scottish “screen” of the period.

In her capacity as wife of the Colonial Secretary for the Cape, Lady Anne Barnard had some difficult work to do in “conciliating the Dutch,” whose wives astounded her by the largeness of their persons and of their families; while she, in her turn, astonished the lethargic society of Capetown

by making the ascent of Table Mountain on foot. But her husband died after a few brief happy years, and she, along with her beautiful widowed sister, Lady Margaret Fordyce, took up house in Berkley Square, London. The little Elizabeth, who had advised her sister to "steal the cow" in the ballad of "Auld Robin Gray," had become Countess of Hardwicke and a great social leader, and she would fain have drawn her brilliant sisters into her own social whirl. Lady Anne, however, preferred to share the shadowed lot of the favourite companion of her youthful days, and although they did not go out into the great world their house became a resort of the most exclusive and witty society in London. The prince on the throne delighted in the gay and happy badinage of his "dear sister Anne," as he called her. Burke, Sheridan, Dundas, and Walpole fell under her gracious spell, and so brilliant was she as a hostess that, on one occasion when she was entertaining a distinguished company at dinner and a hitch occurred in the kitchen, her old servant stepped behind her chair and whispered in an audible aside:—"My lady, you must tell another story. The second course won't be ready for ten minutes!"

The aged mother, Countess Anne, still survived, spending the evening of her life at old Balcarres, and even at ninety-two years had brilliant flashes of the old indomitable spirit, when she would proudly repeat a verse from the sequel to "Auld Robin Gray," "which nobody could do but herself." She sent a message to her daughter, which was surely the finest tribute ever paid by a mother of ninety-two to a gifted daughter of sixty-nine. "Tell Annie," said she, adapting two lines from the second part of "Auld Robin Gray," "that

My wheel I turn round, but I come little speed,  
For my hand is grown feeble and weak is my thread."

The Countess died the next year, and was laid beside her husband in the beautiful chapel of Balcarres. But Lady Anne died in London on May 6, 1825, and that chapel of her race is the poorer because it is not the shrine of her sacred dust.

### AULD ROBIN GRAY

When the sheep are in the fauld and the kye are a' hame,  
And a' the weary warld to rest are gane,  
The woes o' my heart fa' in showers frae my e'e,  
Unkent by my gudeman wha sleeps sound by me.

Young Jamie lo'ed me weel and sought me for his bride,  
 But saving a crown he had naething else beside ;  
 To mak' the crown a pound, my Jamie gaed to sea,  
 And the crown and the pound they were baith for me.

He hadna been gaen a twelvemonth and a day,  
 When my father brak' his arm and the cow was stown away,  
 My mither she fell sick, and Jamie at the sea,  
 When auld Robin Gray cam' a-courtin' me.

My father couldna work, my mither couldna spin ;  
 I toiled baith day and night, but their bread I couldna win.  
 Auld Rab maintained them baith and, wi' tears in his e'e,  
 Said "Jeanie, for their sakes, will ye no marry me?"

My heart it said nay, for I looked for Jamie back,  
 But hard blew the winds, and his ship was a wrack ;  
 His ship was a wrack ! Why didna Jamie dee ?  
 Or why am I spared to cry, O, waes me ?

My father urged me sair ; my mither didna speak,  
 But she lookit in my face till my heart was like to break ;  
 They gied him my hand,—my heart was in the sea—  
 And auld Robin Gray he was gudeman to me.

I hadna been his wife a week but only four,  
 When, mournfu' as I sat on the stane at my door,  
 I saw my Jamie's ghaist, for I couldna think it he,  
 Till he said, "I'm come hame, love, to marry thee."

Oh, sair did we greet and mickle tell o' a' ;  
 I gied him ae kiss and bade him gang awa' ;  
 I wish that I were dead, but I'm no like to dee,  
 For though my heart is broken, I'm but young, waes me !

I gang like a ghaist and I carena to spin :  
 I daurna think on Jamie, for that would be a sin ;  
 But I'll do my best a gude wife aye to be,  
 For auld Robin Gray he is kind to me.

## SECOND PART OF AULD ROBIN GRAY

The winter was come, 'twas summer nae mair,  
 And trembling were scattered the leaves in the air ;  
 " Oh, winter ! " cried Jeanie, " we kindly agree,  
 For wae looks the sun when he shines on me."

Nae langer she wept, her tears were a' spent ;  
 Despair it was come and she thought it content,—  
 She thought it content, but her cheek it grew pale,  
 And she drooped like a snaw-drap broke down by the hail.

Her father and mother observed her decay ;  
 " What ails ye, my bairn ? " they often would say ;  
 " Ye turn round your wheel, but ye come little speed,  
 For your hand has grown feeble and weak is your thread."

She smiled when she heard them, to banish their fear,  
 But wae looks the smile that is seen through a tear,  
 And bitter's the tear that is forced by a love  
 Which virtue and honour can never approve.

Her father was vexed and her mother was wae,  
 But silent and thoughtful was auld Robin Gray ;  
 He wandered his lane and his face it grew lean,  
 Like the side o' a brae where the torrent has been.

Nae questions he speired her concerning her health.  
 He looked at her often, but aye 'twas by stealth ;  
 Then his heart it grew grit and often he feigned  
 To gang to the door to see if it rained.

He took to his bed, nae physie he sought,  
 But ordered his friends all around to be brought ;  
 While Jeanie supported his head in its place  
 Her tears trickled down and fell on his face.

"Oh, greet nae mair, Jeanie !" said he with a groan ;  
 "I'm no worth your sorrow, the truth maun be known ;—  
 Send round for the neibours, my hour it draws near,  
 And I've that to tell that it's fit a' should hear.

"I've wronged her," he said, "but I kent it ower late,  
 I've wronged her, and sorrow is speeding my date ;  
 But a's for the best, for my deith will soon free  
 A faithfu' young heart that was ill matched wi' me.

"I lo'ed and I courted her mony a day,  
 The auld folk were for me, but still she said nay,  
 I kentna o' Jamie nor yet o' her vow,  
 In mercy forgie me !—'twas I stole the cow.

"I cared not for crummie, I thought but o' thee—  
 I thought it was crummie stood 'twixt you and me ;  
 While she fed your parents, oh, did you not say  
 You never would marry wi' auld Robin Gray ?

"But sickness at hame and want at the door,  
 You gied me your hand though your heart it was sore ;  
 I saw it was sore,—why took I her hand ?  
 Oh, that was a deed to my shame o'er the land.

“ But truth soon or late comes to open daylight,  
For Jamie cam’ back and your cheek it grew white—  
White, white grew your cheek, but aye true to me—  
Ay, Jeanie ! I’m thankfu’, I’m thankfu’ to dee !

“ Is Jamie come here yet ? ”—and Jamie they saw—  
“ I’ve injured you sair, lad, but her aboon a’ ;  
Be kind to my Jeanie, and soon may it be,  
Waste nae time, my dauties, in mourning for me.”

They kissed his cauld hands, and a smile ower his face  
Seemed hopefu’ o’ being accepted by grace ;  
“ Oh, doubtna ! ” said Jamie, “ forgi’en he will be !—  
Wha wadna be tempted, my love, to win thee ? ”

. . . . .  
The first days were dowie while time slipped awa’,  
But saddest and sairest to Jeanie o’ a’,  
Was thinking she couldna be honest and right  
Wi’ tears in her e’e while her heart was so light.

But nae guile had she, and her sorrow away,  
The wife o’ her Jamie, the tear couldna stay ;  
A bonnie wee bairn—the auld folk by the fire—  
Oh, now she has all that her heart can desire !

## CHAPTER VIII

### CAROLINA, BARONESS NAIRNE : THE QUEEN OF SONGSTRESSES

I N the annals of the Spindle-side of Scottish Song that was a red-letter day on which the high-born and versatile Carolina Oliphant of Gask, afterwards Lady Nairne, while driving through a village near her Highland home, noted, amid the confusion of the annual fair, that many persons held in their hands a small book of songs with a yellow cover.

Her curiosity being aroused, she despatched her footman to purchase a copy which, on examination, proved to be a collection of old Scots songs and ballads, many of them so essentially gross in sentiment and diction that their dissemination was a positive danger to the morality of the song-loving peasantry of Scotland—a danger rendered more subtle because the indelicate verses were linked with those unique melodies which were



an heirloom to the nation from the remote past.

That day a noble impulse rose in Carolina Oliphant's heart—an impulse which, though she knew it not, placed the sceptre of Scottish song in her hand: she resolved to purify those ribald national songs and to use her lyric genius to elevate the minstrelsy of her native land.

This was in the year 1793, when she was twenty-seven years old, and in the full zenith of her stately charms and of her popularity as a county beauty.

The eighteenth century had brought to Scotland an extraordinary revival of the lyric impulse and—with it—a renewal of love for the national melodies. The desire to sing was “in the air”; it was epidemic, so to speak, and in remote places all over the land the spirit of song was floating, seeking, like the winged thistle-down, congenial conditions for its growth.

Already Neil Gow and his brotherhood of the violin were enchanting the people with their music; Allan Ramsay had tinkered the strings of the Scottish harp to good purpose and had sung his prelude to herald the coming of the master-minstrel Burns;

Ferguson had flung his song out of the darkness and vanished ; Michael Bruce and the long roll of "inheritors of unfulfilled renown" had shared the haunting ecstasy of the singing voice ; Hogg, Tannahill, and many others had continued the swelling strain, and young Walter Scott was humming old ballads as he paced the pavement of Parliament House in his "own romantic town."

On the Spindle-side of Scottish Song the voices were mere sweet threads of melody, but all had the true lyrical ring. The strongest note was that of Joanna Baillie singing to cheer the solitude of her home on the Lanark moors. Carolina Oliphant, the Queen of Scottish Song, had not yet come into her kingdom.

Burns was at the height of his all too brief career when she felt the kindred witching power of Scottish melody, and it is significant to find that she was one of the first to recognise his genius. She had watched with sympathetic appreciation his inspired efforts to relieve the national melodies of their burden of coarse and foolish words, and had welcomed his crowning action of placing the purified minstrelsy in the hands of both "gentle and simple"

through the medium of what is perhaps the finest collection of national songs—"The Scots Musical Museum"—and, later, through that of the invaluable collections of George Thomson.

This pleasant trade of song-writing was not confined to modern adaptations of ancient impure verses. The collections were enriched with many original songs written to preserve favourite tunes or "airs," as they are suggestively termed, and if, perhaps, the rustic minstrelsy was occasionally overpruned, or was over-clarified in the process of refining, surely it was better so than that it should have expired, suffocated in the mire of its original grossness.

Burns and Lady Nairne—these two are the saviours of Scottish song;—these two, so diverse in character, in outlook, in environment, share the honours of sovereignty. He was a peasant, born in a "clay biggin'," wresting a precarious livelihood from the soil, fighting a losing battle with the all-conquering evil which marred alike his life and the splendour of his genius; and she was an aristocrat, born in an ancestral home, exclusive, almost regal in her Highland pride, and so pious that in her saintly old age her faith breathed an almost Alpine

chill of holiness. But these two, separated in so many directions, were one in their genius and in their mission.

But while Burns rejoiced to acknowledge the songs which rushed from his melodious heart, Lady Nairne elected to sing under the veil of anonymity. Besides the popular prejudice of the epoch against any display of feminine intellectuality, the ban of an austere religion still pursued the blithe spirit of Scottish song.

Not only did Carolina Oliphant come of a family who may almost be said to have acquired a heredity in religion, but we have her own expressed opinion that she could not help, in some degree, undervaluing beforehand any feminine literary production. Her songs were known and loved by generations of song-lovers who were ignorant of her name and, except in a few isolated instances, the announcement, when it was made, of her authorship of familiar songs created considerable astonishment.

She was born in that "auld hoose" of Gask in Perthshire which her song has made famous. The mansion stood on a richly wooded eminence rising from the bosom of Strathearn and was

girdled by far-reaching pastoral hills and purple mountains. The Ochils reared their green fastnesses within sight, northward towered the misty Grampians, and in the west uprose Ben Voirlich—the mountain-home of that “bonnie Earn” which rushed singing from its bosom, not only to beautify the Strath but to inspire a poet’s song and thus achieve immortality.

Only an ivy-shrouded southern wall bearing the date 1626 remains to mark the site of the “auld hoose” of Gask, for the edifice, being infested by rats and much too picturesque to be sanitary, was pulled down by the brother of Carolina Oliphant when he became the Laird, and a new mansion was erected about fifty yards higher on the slope.

Strathearn is rich with noble mansions. The Græmes, the Murrays, the Drummonds, have their homes there, strongholds all in the romantic days of the Jacobite cause. Villages cluster round—reminders these of feudal serfdom—Clathy, close to Gask; Dunning and Auchterarder, three miles distant; and in the vicinity are not a few historic battlefields—Methven, Dupplin, Tippermuir; while on the northern banks of the Earn stand the ruins of that “bonnie Gascon Ha’” which

afforded Wallace shelter from sleuth-hound and English foe.

Carolina Oliphant, it will be observed, was cradled not only in the heart of Jacobite Scotland, but in the home of the chief of Jacobite lairds. Her birth is notified in the following fashion in a list written by her father :—"Carolina, *after the King*, at Gask, August 16th, 1766." She was the third child in a family of six. Her mother, who belonged to another staunch Jacobite family—the Robertsons of Strowan—died when she was eight years old.

It is through her songs that Carolina Oliphant has won her way into the hearts of the people ; for, by one of life's many strange contrasts, her personality is wholly patrician, being imbued with an exclusiveness and a reserve which are almost exasperating. The incidents of her life and the progress of her character are chiefly interesting therefore on account of the light they throw on her hidden life of lyrical effort ; and the most trivial hint of the awakening of her poetic faculty is more important to us than the fact that the blood of Robert the Bruce flowed in her veins, or the pleasing legend that a royal duke of the House of Hanover fell in love with her and would have married her, had not

the Royal Marriage Act—and the lady's emphatic nay!—barred the way.

How suggestive, for instance, of her future work of reforming ancient Scottish minstrelsy is this chance allusion to his sister made by her brother in a boyish letter, written when the future songstress was fifteen years old :—" Carolina is just now playing

‘ My wife is lying sick,  
I wish she ne’er may rise again !  
I will put on my tartan dress  
And court another wife again ! ’

*It is a very good tune,*" her brother concludes.

Her first recorded attempt to purify the yellow book of Scottish song was the production of a new version of the then popular ditty, "The Pleughman." Three versions were already known. One appeared in Herd's Collection, published in 1776; the second was this cast into a fresh form by Burns; while the third has a place in Cunningham's "Songs of Scotland."

Carolina Oliphant's set of verses was launched under the following circumstances. Her father died in 1792 and, her elder sisters having married neighbouring lairds, she remained at Gask to pre-



side over the establishment of her brother Lawrence.

About a year after the latter became the Laird he entertained his tenantry to dinner, and there he sang with much vivacity the new version of an old favourite, "The Pleughman." The song was received with enthusiasm, the Laird was urged to reveal the author's name, but while admitting that he knew who wrote the song, he declared himself bound to secrecy. He presented several copies to neighbours in the Strath, however, and, these being passed from hand to hand, ere long the song was sung all over central Scotland. Not till nearly fifty years later was the author's name divulged.

The brilliant reception accorded to this first attempt encouraged Carolina Oliphant, then in her twenty-seventh year, to continue her work of refining the ancient songs of the people. At this period it was observed that she often sat pensively at her desk, but a certain austere habit of silence protected her from inquisitive questioning. A lady, at that time a guest at Gask, concluded that her friend was writing love-letters to her second cousin and betrothed lover, Captain Nairne, to whom her troth had been plighted in early youth.

This gentleman, who was nine years older than his promised bride, "The Flower of Strathearn," was heir to the Nairne peerage; but his family had suffered even more severely than that of the Oliphants in the Stuart cause, for they had endured not only exile but forfeiture of wealth and rank, and their magnificent estates were irretrievably lost to them. Captain Nairne, therefore, had to live in Ireland with his regiment and upon his pay, while he waited for long-deferred promotion.

But Carolina Oliphant, though stedfast of heart, was not a woman wholly to surrender herself to the demands of a "long drawn out" love-correspondence, and while she waited for the time of future union she wrote many of her best songs. To this period belong "The Laird o' Cockpen," "He's a terrible man, John Tod," "Jamie the Laird," "Kitty Reid's Hoose," and the quaint "Twa Doos" with its amusing melody. Certainly these were not the effusions of a love-sick maid!

To this period also, it is supposed, her Jacobite lays belong. They were written to gratify her venerated kinsman, the aged chief of Strowan, from whom she had heard many a tale of the Rebellion—the tale, perhaps, of how her father

brought to Edinburgh the news of the victory of Prestonpans; of how he fought single-handed with "Johnnie Cope's" dragoons; of how he braved the perils of that year of vengeance after "the Forty-five," when he and her grandfather lurked in the caves of Buchan with a price set on their heads; and, finally, of how they escaped to France "in the same boat" literally with their kinsfolk of Robertson and Nairne and of how they passed the long years of exile there.

Carolina Oliphant's poetic spirit kindled at the recital of these and other tales of peril; she captured the elusive sentiment of the Rebellion and embodied it in song just as it was vanishing away.

It is pleasant to conjure up from the past an image of that enthusiastic lady walking in the groves of Gask among the innumerable white roses that grew there,—as was fitting in the demesne of a great Jacobite family—

"Like wee white cockades for our leal Highland lads,"

humming to herself a strain of an ancient pibroch or a haunting melody from Neil Gow's magic fiddle, until she had invoked the spirit of poesy and tuneful words arose to her lips to match the

witching music. Perhaps it was her lilt of romantic devotion, "Charlie is my darling," or the stirring gathering-song of the clans, "Wha'll be King but Charlie?" or the chivalrous lay, "He's ower the hills that I lo'e weel," or that loveliest of them all, "Will ye no come back again?"—though but an adaptation of an older Jacobite lay of the same name.

Almost we conclude with a rueful smile that it was well that Carolina Oliphant sang her stirring songs too late to inspire the followers of "the Young Chevalier" with a frenzy of devotion which might have turned the tide of their affairs towards a victory that would have proved of dubious benefit to Scotland!

Besides rewriting old songs and composing Jacobite ditties, Carolina Oliphant provided a rich treasure of original lyrics:—"Caller Herrin'" with its original air by Neil Gow; "The Auld Hoose," "The Rowan Tree," "The Mitherless Lammie," and the spirited—now too little known—song of "The Regalia," and a host of others besides. But the chiefest treasure among her songs and Scotland's most cherished lyrical possession, is the deathless hymn, "The Land o' the Leal."

This song has sung itself into the life of the nation. It is the cradle-croon of Scotland's chil-

dren ; it is also a sacred chant to comfort the dying. Few are the Scots who have not some hallowed personal memories connected with it. It has been the favourite song of many beloved voices that are still ; it tells of many a " bonnie bairn " who glorified our homes for a space ; it holds memories of patient invalids whose presence made our hearths a sanctuary ; it recalls the quavering sigh of our aged who solaced their time of waiting for rest with its lofty assurance :—

" Sorrow's sel' wears past, John,  
And joy is coming fast, John,  
The joy that aye shall last  
In the land o' the leal."

A few words relating to the history of this matchless song will be acceptable.

From a note on the song given at the end of Dr. Rogers's biography of Lady Nairne we gather that the song was written in 1798 to console a dear friend who had lost by death her first-born child.

The lady was Mrs. Campbell Colquhoun of Killermont. Her maiden name was Mary Anne Erskine, and her brother, Lord Kinnedder, was the friend to whom the third canto of " Marmion " was dedicated by Sir Walter Scott. It is said that the

young lawyer Walter Scott was an unsuccessful suitor for the hand of his friend's sister, whose affections were given to Mr. Campbell Colquhoun, Sheriff of Perthshire.

About a year after their union a daughter was born, but she faded away when scarcely a year old. Mrs. Colquhoun seems to have been of a very highly-strung and morbid temperament, and she is said to have caused a wax cast of her child to be prepared so that the face of her lost darling might be ever before her. It was to soothe this intense grief that the "Land o' the Leal" was written and sent by Carolina Oliphant to her friend, with the request that her authorship should never be revealed without her permission.

The song was set to the air, "Hey! Tuttie Tuttie!"—an ancient Scottish battle-call. By a change in the time, this tune can be transformed from a melody of melting pathos—as in "The Land o' the Leal"—into the martial strains of "Scots wha hae."

When verging on old age, Lady Nairne wrote as follows in revelation of her authorship:—"The Land o' the Leal' is a happy rest for the mind in this dark pilgrimage. . . . Oh yes! I was young

then. I wrote it merely because I liked the air so much, and I put these words to it, never fearing questions as to the authorship. However, a lady would know, and took it down, and I had not Sir Walter's art of denying. I was present when it was asserted that Burns composed it on his death-bed, and that he had it *Jean* instead of *John*; but the parties could not decide why it never appeared in his works as his last song should have done. I never answered. . . . I have only acknowledged the authorship to a single other person except at your bidding."

That "single other person" is supposed to have been Mrs. Colquhoun.

It is interesting to find that the following verse does not appear in the original manuscript, but was written some years later when Carolina Oliphant was under the influence of intense religious convictions:—

" Sae dear's that joy was bought, John,  
 Sae free the battle fought, John,  
 That sinful man e'er brought  
 To the land o' the leal."

This verse takes its place in, nay more, merges into the text of the song without any effort or strain.



So intrinsically lofty was the mood which inspired the additional verse that the latter may be said to be her creed in cameo.

Regarding these religious convictions of Carolina Oliphant a few words are necessary, because her "conversion" tinged the sentiments of her succeeding lyrics and dominated her actions to the close of her life.

In her day religion was a much more rigid and pervasive influence than, on the whole, it is to-day. Life was regarded as "a discipline" and the death of those whom we loved as "a test" of faith and a means of "weaning" us from the world. Lady Nairne's own words show exactly how narrow her religious outlook was. In old age, after she had been bereft of husband and only child, she writes:—"I delight in seeing all merely human anticipations contradicted by the high and gracious power that overrules all"; and again, long afterwards, she says:—"My weaning has been such that I rejoice in the rapid lapse of days, months, and years, even more than when, a too happy wife and mother, I eagerly wished the continuance of domestic happiness—a plain proof of the necessity of heavenly discipline which has not been withheld."

Several events combined to render Carolina Oliphant peculiarly susceptible to religious influences. Her sensitive nature was touched at a time when, in all probability, she was secretly enduring the bitterness of that deferred hope which "maketh the heart sick," for her lover's promotion was still nebulous and she was now past her youth. Moreover, her brother Laurence had brought a capable wife to rule the establishment at Gask and his sister was relegated to the position of an honoured guest in her old home. She had also an intense, vicarious grief for the death of her younger brother Charles who died abroad in early manhood, his high impracticable hopes in ruins around him. All these different factors contributed to the creation of an impressionable frame of mind, and it is related of her that on the occasion of a visit to Murthly Castle she was influenced so powerfully by the address of an English clergyman, who officiated at family prayers, that she dated her spiritual birth from that time.

She continued to dwell at Gask till 1806, when at last the fidelity of the lovers was rewarded by union. Captain Nairne received the rank of Major,

and was appointed Assistant Inspector-General of Barracks in Scotland. The bride was forty-one and the bridegroom fifty years old when their marriage took place at Gask.

Major and Mrs. Nairne took up their abode in the vicinity of Edinburgh, his duties being connected with the Castle there.

The generous aged chief of Strowan purchased for his grand-daughter a pretty house at Wester Duddingston under the shadow of Arthur's Seat, and in compliment to her it was named Carolina Cottage. In 1808 her only child, a son, was born.

Edinburgh, though then in the hey-day of its literary celebrity, had very little social influence upon the exclusive Highland lady. Possibly, with characteristic intensity of feeling, she devoted herself almost entirely to her husband and child. Major Nairne was a man of exceedingly winning manners with a great fund of cheerfulness. He is said to have been the hero of two of his wife's songs—"Robin is my ain Guidman," and "Oh, Weel's me on my ain man."

There is extant a fine painting of Mrs. Nairne and her son, executed, apparently, when the latter was about nine years old. She is represented as

of very distinguished and commanding presence, and there is a Sphinx-like quiet in the face. The onlooker is conscious of a feeling of awe rather than of that spontaneous feeling of affection which is the tribute to the *debonnair* countenance of Lady Anne Lindsay.

It is impossible now to discover from what point of view Mrs. Nairne regarded the social life of Edinburgh, because she destroyed the entire correspondence addressed to her during the period of her married life. But Mrs. Barbour of Bonskeid—Lady Nairne's grand-niece—in her printed recollections of her illustrious relative unwittingly throws a suggestive sidelight on a point which has puzzled not a few readers of the life of the authoress of "The Land o' the Leal,"—namely, why Sir Walter Scott and she, living in Edinburgh at the same time and having many friends in common, remained almost strangers to each other.

Mrs. Barbour tells us that after the death of Lady's Nairne's son, which occurred in Brussels, she, a girl of fifteen, accompanied her parents on their hurried journey thither. One evening, during that time of mourning, Mrs. Barbour was reading aloud from Lockhart's "Life of Sir Walter Scott,"

when she came upon a note discussing the authorship of "The Land o' the Leal." "It was something like going to the cannon's mouth to read it to her," says Mrs. Barbour, "and if blushes could betray the knowledge of a secret, Lady Nairne's observant eye must have seen them. She said more than once—'Poor Sir Walter! we did not put ourselves in his way or we might have seen much of him. One so attractive as he was, and who had yet been bold enough to single out God's servants for derision as he did the Covenanters, placing them in a light so false, would have been a dangerous friend.'"

But she proved that she appreciated his genius, nevertheless, by her reference to him in her "Farewell to Edinburgh":—

"Fareweel, Edinburgh, your sons of genius fine  
That send your name on wings of flame beyond the burning line;  
A name that's stood 'maist since the flood!—and just when it's  
forgot,  
Your bard will be forgotten too, your ain Sir Walter Scott."

Many of her songs are coloured by her surroundings at this Edinburgh period. She composed a lament for the death of a young soldier quartered at Piershill barracks near Edinburgh

who had been killed in a duel; she sang of lonely "Rullion Green" and the graves of the martyrs; she wrote the pathetic "Lament of the Covenanter's Widow"; and a sweet song was wafted to her from the green heights that guarded her cottage—a song of "Jeannie Deans" whom Scott had just then immortalised in the "Heart of Midlothian," published in 1818. The song of "The Regalia" with its stirring refrain of "Flourish, Thistle!" was written in the same year on the occasion of the discovery of the ancient Scottish insignia in Edinburgh Castle after it had lain in unsuspected obscurity for a hundred years locked in an oak chest in a well-nigh forgotten strong-room. One likes to muse on the curious fact that although Sir Walter Scott, enthusiastic and almost beside himself with joy, was present when that old oak chest was opened and the historic regalia disclosed to the light of day no song was vouchsafed to him. The lyric spirit which had shared the regalia's century of imprisonment fluttered upwards amid the sun-lit dust-motes, and would have evaporated into space if the electric soul of Carolina Nairne had not divined its presence and captured it to embody it in song.

Ravelston House was one of the few Edinburgh residences which was visited by Major and Mrs. Nairne. This well-known hospitable mansion, which holds a unique place in the literary history of the Scottish capital, was situated on the north side of Corstorphine Hill in the vicinity of Edinburgh. It will be remembered that Mrs. Cockburn was a frequent visitor to her "Scotch cousins" there, with whom Sir Walter Scott also claimed kindred.

At the time of the Nairnes' residence in Edinburgh the Keiths of Ravelston were represented by the Laird, then approaching seventy years of age, and his spinster sister who, on the strength of being several years her brother's senior, was wont to electrify strangers by referring to him as "that laddie Sandy." Possibly the Laird was one of those happy individuals whose hearts remain young long after their heads are grey: at all events he became enamoured of Mrs. Nairne's younger sister, Margaret Oliphant, who reciprocated his affection and was united to him in marriage.

The Keiths of Ravelston exercised a typically Scotch style of hospitality. Guests were expected to "look in" every Saturday *sans ceremonie*, and after



walking and talking for some time among the groves of Ravelston they had luncheon, consisting of hotch-potch, cock-a-leeky, and haggis. Dessert was thereafter carried to the shady lawn. Conversation and games followed until, in answer to the warning bell, the guests adjourned to the house, where tea and coffee were handed round. The rest of the evening was devoted to what was then a fashionable fad—the singing of ancient and modern Scottish songs; and, in deference to the strongly expressed views of the Laird's sister anent what she termed “artificial music,” the use of instrumental accompaniments was tabooed and the voice rose and swelled unaided on the tide of melody.

On one such occasion a young lady—Miss Helen Walker of Dalry—sang a ballad and, when she ceased, some one of her audience declared that there were more verses to the song. The young lady protested that she had sung all she knew, and the first speaker said with a smile, “Do you see that fair lady seated at the end of the room? Go to her and she will give you the verses you want; for never, I believe, was anything in poetry said or sung that she does not know.”

Miss Walker promptly acted on this advice

After some conversation about song and ballad literature, the elder lady handed her card to Miss Walker and cordially invited her to visit her. This lady, whose habitual reserve was so abruptly broken through by the charm of a kindred nature, was Mrs. Nairne. Miss Walker was an enthusiastic lover of Scottish song, so she very soon established an intimate acquaintance with Mrs. Nairne, and in the course of a few years the latter entrusted Miss Walker with the secret of her authorship of the favourite song, "The Land o' the Leal"; and, while exhorting her not to reveal the fact, she added with a smile, "I have not even told Nairne, lest he blab!"

Two other Edinburgh ladies enjoyed the friendship of Mrs. Nairne and greatly influenced her lyrical career. These ladies were the Misses Hume, daughters of the Honourable David Hume, Baron of Exchequer. They possessed quite remarkable musical ability and, in fact, set the musical fashions of the city.

It was on that account that in the year 1821 a certain Mr. Robert Purdie, musical publisher, consulted them regarding a project which occupied his thoughts—the publication of a collection of national airs with words suitable for refined circles. He

invited the assistance of the Misses Hume in his scheme, and they in turn approached Mrs. Nairne on the subject, knowing her enthusiasm for national song.

Now indeed had Mrs. Nairne's grand opportunity arrived ;—now had struck the hour towards which her whole lifetime of aspiration had been tending ;—at last she was enabled to realise her heart's desire—the purification of Scottish song.

A committee of ladies was speedily formed. They met privately and pledged themselves to scrupulous secrecy regarding the object of their meeting, and in this “conspiracy of silence” Mrs. Nairne was the ruling spirit. She agreed to contribute to Mr. Purdie's “Scottish Minstrel” upon condition not only that her real name should be kept a secret but that even her *nom-de-plume*—Mrs. Bogan of Bogan—should be communicated to him with injunctions not to divulge it. The ladies must have enjoyed Mr. Purdie's assurances that he would respect the confidence reposed in him and that he had instructed his musical editor—the celebrated Mr. Robert A. Smith—not to mention to any one that they had obtained the distinguished services of Mrs. Bogan of Bogan ! He also agreed,

at that lady's request, to place only her initials at the foot of her contributions.

"The Scottish Minstrel" was issued in "parts," and as these duly appeared the attention of the musical public was first arrested, then roused to enthusiasm. Some discerning critics approached Mr. Purdie with a view to discover whose identity was concealed under the often-recurring initials B. B., and Mrs. Nairne became alarmed lest her secret should leak out. Fearing that the publisher might, innocently enough, stumble into some statement regarding her initials which would render her position embarrassing, she varied her signature, sometimes using the letters S. M. (Scottish Minstrel); but even that subterfuge proved perilous on account of the extraordinary attention attracted towards Mr. Purdie's venture. And no wonder, for song after song was placed before a delighted and mystified public with almost extravagant lavishness; and there arose a clamour to know who it was that possessed this inexhaustible lyric gift. "Who is B. B.?" was the leading question in musical circles. Mrs. Nairne was present on more than one occasion when this question was raised, and she grew increasingly disquieted regard-

ing the secret of her name. Her last device to preserve her *incognita* was a freak quite worthy of the clever Miss Stirling-Graham, of whose quaint "mystifications" Mrs. Nairne had probably heard.

She disguised herself as a gentlewoman of the ancient *régime* and, proceeding to the business premises of the unsuspecting Mr. Purdie, announced herself to be Mrs. Bogan of Bogan, stating that she had called in person to receive anew his solemn promise not to reveal her name!

She is said to have visited Mr. Purdie in this disguise on several occasions for the purpose of discussing business connected with the "Scottish Minstrel"—a piece of daring humour which makes one wonder what that gentleman would have said if he had discovered that the "extremely diffident old lady" in ancient attire was none other than the haughty wife of the well-known, genial Major Nairne whose figure was so familiar in Edinburgh.

In the preface to the sixth and final volume of the "Scottish Minstrel," which was completed in 1824, Messrs. Purdie and Smith state that "the editors would have felt happy in being permitted to enumerate the many and beautiful verses that adorn their pages for which they are indebted

to the author of the much-admired song 'The Land o' the Leal,' but they fear to wound a delicacy which shrinks from all observation."

After the last volume of the "Scottish Minstrel" had been successfully launched the committee of ladies, seeking for "other worlds to conquer" and grown bolder now, though still maintaining their anonymity, concocted a plan, for the failure of which we are most devoutly thankful. This plan was nothing less than the issue of a "purified" edition of the Songs of Burns! Mrs. Nairne laboured for some time at this task of "gilding refined gold," and ultimately abandoned it.

It would appear that certain apartments in Holyrood Palace had been gifted by the authorities to Major Nairne as a residence. But in 1822 it was found necessary to prepare the palace for the forthcoming visit of his Majesty George IV., and Major Nairne surrendered his claim to the suite of apartments, receiving from the authorities in lieu of the residence the sum of £300 per annum, which was to be continued to his wife if she survived him.

Major Nairne re-established his home at Carolina Cottage. At the king's first *levée*, held at Holyrood, a number of representatives of those

peers whose titles had been forfeited during the Jacobite Rebellion waited upon his Majesty to tender their allegiance to the House of Hanover. Among them was Major Nairne—presented to the king by his kinsman, the Duke of Athol.

The royal visit was by the “canny Scots” deemed a good opportunity of pleading for the restoration of the honours wrested from the representatives of their families during the Rebellion. Time had given a juster perspective to the cause for which the Scottish peers had suffered “the loss of all things,” and their descendants regarded it very much in the light of a merely romantic incident in the national history,—an incident for which, however, they had had to pay the penalty.

Sir Walter Scott—ever foremost in patriotic projects—prepared a memorial praying the king to restore the titles to these descendants of the attainted Scottish nobles. His Majesty was graciously pleased to grant the request of his subjects, and in 1824 an Act of Parliament was passed by which the attainder was removed.

Tradition has it that his Majesty’s clemency towards Lord Nairne in particular was partly to be attributed to the fact that Lady Nairne’s song,



“The Attainted Scottish Nobles,” was sung during the royal visit to Holyrood.

When the ancestral title was restored to him Lord Nairne was in his sixtieth year. Like many more he was a “landless lord,” for the fine family estates in Strathard, Perthshire, had been purchased from Government by his father’s treacherous kinsman, one of the Murrays of Athol, who had coveted it because it was adjacent to his own property. He had also caused the ancestral mansion of the Nairnes to be razed to the ground—an act of Vandalism bitterly resented by the exiled family.

Carolina, Baroness Nairne, gloried in her barren honours with true Highland pride and poetic veneration for the heroic past. It was reserved for her son, the sixth and last Lord Nairne, fully to realise the bitter significance of being lord of a lost inheritance when, after his father’s death, he visited in his twenty-sixth year the Strath on the eve of leaving his country for ever; and, gazing upon the wide-spreading lands which would have descended to him had not his grandfather marshalled his men to fight for Prince Charlie, he “spoke mournfully of the reverses of his House.”

After a few more happy years spent by the little household at Carolina Cottage, death knocked at the door and Lady Nairne needed all the consolation which her high faith was capable of affording; for her husband, after a brief period of declining health, died in July 1830—just six years after he had been restored to the Scottish peerage.

Soon afterwards Lady Nairne finally relinquished her Edinburgh home, urged thereto by a harassing suspicion that the climate of that city of east winds and salt *haars* from the Firth of Forth was too rigorous for the fragile constitution of her son.

For a time she resided in Ireland, the land of her husband's birth, and during her sojourn there she wrote a few patriotic songs, but none of enduring fame.

Ultimately the mother and son travelled from city to city on the Continent in that pathetic pursuit of health which many a wanderer from his own country knows too well. Unfortunately the end was hastened for Lord Nairne. He contracted influenza at Brussels and died there in December 1837, in his thirtieth year. Lady Nairne,

now an aged woman of seventy-two, was thus left bereft of all she held most dear. Her noble and pious heart did not dwell selfishly alone with sorrow, however, but expended its pent-up compassion on all who were in trouble.

Her piety, if it was narrow in dogma, was boundless in its practical issues. She herself declared that "religion should be a walking and not a talking concern," and her charities were unceasing, albeit in the main as strictly anonymous as were the songs of Mrs. Bogan of Bogan.

Though her orderly existence was filled with good works and her wanderings in foreign cities continued, she yet found time to cultivate that lyric genius which was at once her crown and her solace. The muse, chastened now, hovered near her still, and among various spiritual songs which at this time came from her pen, one stands out pre-eminently lofty and perfect—that brave hymn of age, "Would you be young again?"

"Would you be young again?  
 So would not I;  
 One tear to memory given,  
 Onward I'd hie.

Life's dark flood forded o'er,  
 All but at rest on shore,  
 Say, would you plunge once more  
 With home so nigh?"

This poem was a last fitful flash of genius, and was written in her seventy-sixth year, three years before her death.

Lady Nairne spent her closing years at Gask. She had wished never to return to Scotland, having the keen reluctance inherent in the imaginative temperament to awaken memories of joys

“Departed never to return”;

but by the earnest entreaties of the Laird of Gask—the son of her brother Laurence—her reluctance was overcome. He and his wife journeyed to Paris to conduct her home, and in the spring of 1843 the aged poetess of Strathearn looked once more on the old familiar scenery and recalled the days that were no more.

The fire of life was burning low in her dauntless heart. She frequently referred to life as “the dream of a dream and the shadow of a shadow”—a truly Celtic view; but this inward aloofness did not deter her from continuing to succour

many who had found life—not a dream, but—a battle.

She “set her house in order” with characteristic thoroughness, apportioning to the numerous charitable schemes in which she was interested certain sums out of the funds in possession of which Lord Nairne’s death had placed her.

After spending two years and a half at Gask, Lady Nairne died on a calm October Sabbath morning—October 27, 1845—aged seventy-nine. She lies at Gask within the sacred enclosure of the chapel there.

On the lawn at Gask House stands her memorial cross, on which are inscribed the words :—

“Carmina Morte Carent.”  
(Her songs are immortal.)

Her interest in Scottish song never waned. She died while her volume of “Lays from Strathearn” was in course of preparation, and the frontispiece—a sketch of the Auld Hoose of Gask—was the work of her pencil.

She had consented to the publication of the collection on the old condition that her name should not appear. But after her death the

widowed Mrs. Keith of Ravelston, her only remaining sister and her nearest representative, granted permission to publish the volume with the author's name attached.

What a revelation awaited lovers of Scottish song when the "Lays of Strathearn" was published and they discovered that so many of their favourite songs were written by the reserved and pious lady, Carolina, Baroness Nairne, and that she was the unknown B. B. who had showered song, unseen and supreme, like a lark from the sky!

### THE LAND O' THE LEAL

I'm wearin' awa', John,  
Like snaw-wreaths in thaw, John ;—  
I'm wearin' awa'  
To the land o' the leal.

There's nae sorrow there, John,  
There's neither cauld nor care, John ;  
The day is aye fair  
In the land o' the leal.

Our bonnie bairn's there, John ;  
She was baith gude and fair, John  
And oh ! we grudged her sair  
To the land o' the leal.

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But sorrow's sel' wears past, John,  
And joy is comin' fast, John,—  
The joy that's aye to last  
In the land o' the leal.

Sae dear's that joy was bought, John,  
Sae free the battle fought, John,  
That sinfu' men e'er brought  
To the land o' the leal.

Oh, dry your tearfu' e'e, John !  
My soul lang's to be free, John,  
And angels beckon me  
To the land o' the leal.

Oh, haud ye leal and true, John !  
Your day is wearin' through, John,  
And I will welcome you  
To the land o' the leal.

Now fare ye weel, my ain John,  
This world's cares are vain, John ;  
We'll meet and aye be fain  
In the land o' the leal.

## THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN

The Laird o' Cockpen he's proud and he's great,  
His mind is ta'en up wi' the things o' the State ;  
He wanted a wife his braw hoose to keep,  
But favour wi' wooin' was fashious to seek.



Doon by the dyke-side a lady did dwell :  
 At his table-head he thought she'd look well—  
 M'Clish's ae dochter o' Claverse-ha'-Lee,  
 A penniless lass wi' a lang pedigree.

His wig was weel pouthered,—as guid as when new,  
 His waistcoat was white and his coat it was blue ;  
 He put on a ring, a sword, and cock'd hat—  
 And wha could refuse the Laird wi' a' that ?

He took the grey mare and he rade cannily,  
 And he rapp'd at the yett o' Claverse-ha'-Lee :—  
 “Gae, tell Mistress Jean to come speedily ben ;  
 She's wanted to speak to the Laird o' Cockpen.”

Mistress Jean she was makin' the elder-flower wine :—  
 “And what brings the Laird at sic a like time ?”  
 She put aff her apron and on her silk goon,  
 Her mutch wi' red ribbons and gaed awa' doon.

And when she came ben he bowed fu' low,  
 And what was his errand he soon let her know.  
 Amazed was the Laird when the leddy said “Na !”  
 As wi' a laigh curtsie she turned awa' !

Dumfounded was he, but nae sigh did he gi'e,  
 He mounted his mare and he rade cannily ;  
 And often he thocht as he gaed through the glen,—  
 “She's daft to refuse the Laird o' Cockpen !”

WILL YE NO COME BACK AGAIN?

Bonnie Charlie's noo awa',  
 Safely ower the friendly main;  
 Mony a heart will break in twa  
 Should he ne'er come back again.

Will ye no come back again?  
 Will ye no come back again?  
 Better lo'ed ye canna be;—  
 Will ye no come back again?

Ye trusted in your Hieland men;—  
 They trusted you, dear Charlie;  
 They kent you hiding in the glen,  
 Death and exile braving.

Will ye no come back again? &c.

English bribes were a' in vain.  
 Though puir and puirer we maun be,  
 Siller canna buy the hearts  
 That beat aye for thine and thee.

Will ye no come back again? &c.

We watched thee in the gloamin' hour,  
 We watched thee in the morning grey;  
 Though thirty thousand pounds they'd gi'e,  
 Oh, there is nane that would betray!

Will ye no come back again? &c.

Sweet the laverock's note and lang,  
 Liling wildly up the glen;  
 But aye to me he sings ae sang—  
 Will ye no come back again?

Will ye no come back again? &c.

### CALLER HERRIN'

Wha'll buy my caller herrin' ?  
 They're bonnie fish and halesome farin' ;  
 Wha'll buy my caller herrin'  
 New drawn frae the Forth ?

When ye were sleepin' on your pillows,  
 Dreamed ye aught o' our puir fellows,  
 Darkling as they faced the billows  
 A' to fill the woven willows ?

Buy my caller herrin'  
 New drawn frae the Forth.

Wha'll buy my caller herrin' ?  
 They're no brocht here without brave darin' ;  
 Buy my caller herrin'  
 Haul'd through wind and rain.

Wha'll buy my caller herrin' ? &c.

Wha'll buy my caller herrin' ?  
 Oh, ye may ca' them vulgar farin' ;—  
 Wives and mithers, maist despairin',  
 Ca' them lives o' men.

Wha'll buy my caller herrin' ? &c.

. . . . .

## CHAPTER IX

### JOANNA BAILLIE: THE BLUE-STOCKING SONGSTRESS

TO be endowed with mental powers beyond the safe and happy average of women is, on the whole, undesirable; for intellect tends to isolate a woman from the ordinary aims and attractive frivolities of her sex, rendering her lot solitary and her outlook in life dreary, apart from the ineffable compensation afforded by her mental pursuits and triumphs.

This was pre-eminently true of Joanna Baillie, who was undoubtedly the most intellectual of the Scottish songstresses. She was a daughter of the Manse, having been born on September 11, 1762, at Bothwell, near Glasgow, in the house of her father, who had just been appointed minister of the parish. Joanna, along with a twin sister who died at birth, made her premature appearance amid the domestic chaos involved in a "flitting."

Her father, Dr. James Baillie, was descended from an illustrious Scottish family. He numbered among his ancestors the patriot and soldier, Sir William Wallace and also that martyr of the Covenant, Robert Baillie of Jerviswood, whose son married Lady Grisell Hume, the earliest of the Scottish songstresses.

Joanna Baillie's mother was a member of the intellectual family of the Hunters of Hunterston in Ayrshire. Her two brothers were celebrated for their practical knowledge of medical science, and her daughter Joanna was named after one of these brothers—Dr. John Hunter, the distinguished anatomist.

Joanna had one surviving brother and a sister, both older than herself. Matthew, her brother, lived to be the most eminent physician in London and medical adviser at the court of George III.; and Agnes, a singularly amiable and intelligent lady, was her famous sister's lifelong companion and house-mate.

The first six years of Joanna Baillie's life were spent at Bothwell; and certainly that locality with its wealth of legendary and historic association must have been a stimulus to the imagination of

the child who was even then unconsciously photographing upon her memory the scenery around her home. Wallace had wandered in hiding there, and there he had been betrayed to his English foes; and when Joanna Baillie was at the zenith of her fame she portrayed the hero's adventures amid the scenery imprinted on her childish memory. The limpid stream that flowed beneath the arch of Bothwell Brig once ran red with Covenanters' blood; the moors for miles round were "flowered with martyrs"; the very mists had once been accounted the cloak of the Lord to screen the "puir hill folk" from the fury of the questing dragoons.

These and similar incidents would be recounted by the minister of Bothwell Manse to his children. The tiny Joanna was a keen observer and found much to interest her in the motley crowd of pedlars, old soldiers, and beggars of all degrees with whom Scotland was at that time overrun, and who found, as was then the custom, rest and hospitality in the Manse kitchen. One can fancy the demure little maid peeping shyly out upon one of these poor travellers from the sanctuary of her mother's gown, as that grave matron dispensed the customary

dole of bannocks and cheese, keeping the while a vigilant eye on her serving-maids, lest these "glaikit lasses" should spend all their scanty earnings on the gewgaws glittering in the pedlar's opened pack. Not that the pedlar's pack was quite given over to frivolities. Various thrifty and indispensable household wares were gladly purchased thence, and happy was the lass who found favour in the pedlar's eyes and received a rustling broadsheet of ballads along with the bobbins and needles she had bought.

The little daughter, Agnes of the Manse, was proud to spell through the badly-printed sheet for the benefit of the listening servants after their work was done; for it was not Joanna who conned the ballad-lore, since she was a sworn foe to anything in the form of reading. It is indeed recorded of the future "blue-stocking" that she could not read fluently till her tenth year. Till then she was a thorough child of Nature, a lover of out-of-doors, a student in the eternal school where she was receiving an education which not the best schoolmaster in broad Scotland was able to give.

When this most ignorant of clever girls was



six years old her father was appointed minister of the collegiate church of Hamilton, and with his family he removed to the larger life and more varied interests of the ducal town.

Joanna, who seems to have been a fragile child, had by that time, thanks to her love of Nature doubtless, outgrown her infantile delicacy of constitution. Her mind shared in the genial increase of her bodily strength, and she began to distinguish herself among her youthful companions as a teller of original tales. She also developed a *penchant* for harmless trickery—the result of high spirits—which gave her actions a delightful flavour of unexpectedness, and altogether it was an exciting pleasure to accompany Joanna on a rambling expedition. Her imagination peopled the woods with fairies and ogres, and she possessed a dashing courage which led her, to the huge delight of her companions who looked on in a pleasant terror, to scamper barebacked on any pony that chanced to be cropping the meadow grass and to run along the top of a wall rather than walk securely in its shadow.

But the progress of her education continued to lag behind in this rushing tide of youthful

energy, and still Joanna frankly continued to shirk anything in the form of "lessons." Therefore, to check her native wildness and direct her untutored cleverness, her parents decided to send her to Glasgow to be educated there.

In her tenth year, therefore, when many a cottar's bairn was leaving school with all the education it was ever to receive packed out of sight under its flaxen curls, Joanna the hoyden and her quiet sister Agnes went to a select Boarding-school presided over by a lady with sensible views regarding the education and—more particularly—the manners and deportment of young ladies.

There Joanna learned to "play on the guitar and to accompany it agreeably with her voice"; there she was also taught drawing and the use of the domestic needle—an art in which, it is satisfactory to know, the future poetess excelled. Her favourite study was mathematics. Doubtless her strong reasoning powers and her crystalline sanity of judgment found in that science their natural nutriment.

At school, as in the fields and woods at home, her faculty of story-telling rendered her a popular companion, and in the sunshine of appreciation

she developed a talent for mimicry. The transition from mimicry to dramatic representation was but another step, and ere long Joanna introduced into the school-room festivities the pastime of acting charades and scenes from favourite plays—thus unconsciously foreshadowing her career as a dramatic writer.

Joanna's school companions, searching back in their memories to trace this dawning gift, have recorded that she not only invented many of the dialogues but also fashioned the dresses of her *dramatis personæ*. Her ingenuity in this direction was astonishing. The heroines of her invention were bedecked by her clever hands in flounces and ruffles manufactured out of those scraps of coloured cloth so dear to the girlish heart, and her hero was literally

“A king of shreds and patches,”

for when the combined supply of cloth failed she supplemented his costume with ruffles of exercise-paper!

In 1776, when Joanna had reached her fifteenth year, her father was appointed Professor of Divinity in Glasgow University, and in the course of the

winter the family went into residence in the house provided by the College.

Fifteen is an impressionable age, and Joanna, clever and gay, with an intelligence alert and electric at every point, revelled in the intellectual and social life connected with the College. We learn that she was considered rather an alarming young lady by some of her father's students and was accounted distinctly too clever for a girl. Her native dignity had emerged from her hoydenhood like the genius out of the magic bottle of smoke and had developed to such an extent that her companions, we are told, stood in awe of her.

It would seem, moreover, that the girlish courage which had prompted her to run along the parapets of bridges and the tops of walls found a new and equally congenial outlet in controversial dispute, and she was reckoned no mean adversary by those students who deigned to break an argumentative lance with her. Indeed, it is not difficult to discern that Joanna manifested at that period of her development both aggressiveness and opinionativeness—qualities which hardened in her maturer years into an invincible tenacity and even stubbornness of purpose that was at once the greatest

strength and the most perilous weakness in her character.

The pleasant life in Glasgow with its social and learned reunions was all too brief in duration. In two years her father died, and his widow and daughters went into retirement at Long Calderwood in Lanarkshire, a small estate belonging to Mrs. Baillie's elder brother. There they resided in deep seclusion for six years. Doubtless the two young sisters found existence among the solitudes of the Lanark moors a very monotonous affair after the social whirl of Glasgow; but Agnes and her mother who were devoted to charitable objects found scope for their gentle benevolence among the poor around the estate, and Joanna renewed her old love for roaming out-of-doors.

It was during these quiet years spent at Long Calderwood that Joanna's gift of song came to her to cheer her solitude and to attest the truth of the words of Burns, although at that time they were not yet written :—

“The Muse nae poet ever faund her,  
Till by himsel’ he learned to wander  
Adown some trotting burn’s meander  
And no think lang;  
Oh, sweet to stray and pensive ponder  
A heart-felt sang !”

And thus it came about that the Calder Water, its brawling rapids, its dreamy pools, held a song for Joanna's ears.

Her biographer, in the sketch of her life to be found in the second edition of her collected works, is rather inclined to belittle her lyrical efforts and is careful to state that before she left Scotland in 1784—at the conclusion of those six years of retirement—she had written “nothing beyond a humorous poem or song thrown off in mirth and thought of no more.”

Nevertheless, the fact remains that, at a distance of more than a hundred years after they were written, Joanna Baillie's songs are still popular, while the ambitious dramas on which she staked her fame are known only to the book-lover and the student of the drama. How few have read her “Plays of the Passions,” although they took the stage by storm in her lifetime, won the admiration of Sir Walter Scott and Byron and Campbell, poets all, and were acted by Kemble and his great sister, Mrs. Siddons!

But what lover of Scottish song does not know her version of “Saw ye Johnny comin’?”—a song so intrinsically Scottish both in sentiment and in

vernacular that even Burns with his super-keen ear for the genuine note of the ancient minstrelsy "took it to be very old." And what song-lover has not laughed at her droll "Tam o' the Lin," and her "Weary pund o' tow," and sung her "Fy! let us a' to the Bridal"—which is a refined version of Sempill's grosser ditty—and enjoyed the humour of "It was on a morn when we were thrang"?

Her graver songs are also well known. "Poverty parts good company" is the best specimen of these; but her most popular song is "Saw ye Johnny comin'?"—

"Fee him, faither, fee him!" quo' she;  
 "Fee him, faither, fee him!"  
 A' the wark aboot the hoose  
 Gangs wi' me when I see him.  
 A' the wark aboot the hoose  
 I gang sae lichtly through it,  
 And though ye pay some merks o' gear—  
 Hoot! ye winna rue it!" quo' she,  
 "Na! ye winna rue it."

In the winter of 1783 Dr. William Hunter, the founder of the family fortunes died, having bequeathed to Matthew Baillie, his nephew, his mansion in Great Windmill Street, London. This



mansion was a stately structure built on a unique plan. Attached to the family apartments there were an anatomical theatre, a spacious lecture-room, and a museum containing not only the results of Dr. William Hunter's original physiological researches but also a valuable collection of coins, pictures, and books. To Matthew Baillie was bequeathed the use of this museum for a term of thirty years, after which it was to become the property of Glasgow University. At the present day it is well known in that city under the name of the Hunterian Museum.

In addition, Dr. William Hunter willed to his nephew the estate of Long Calderwood, a family inheritance which would, in the natural course of things, have gone to his surviving brother, Dr. John Hunter, the celebrated anatomist. But that gentleman, it is said, had displeased his elder brother by his marriage to Miss Anne Home, a lady of great beauty and social charm and the authoress of the already-mentioned song, "My mother bids me bind my hair."

Dr. Matthew Baillie's sense of honour and justice forbade his acceptance of his uncle's inheritance, and he unhesitatingly offered the estate to Dr.

John Hunter, who as unhesitatingly accepted it at his nephew's hands. This quixotic abnegation seems to have been regarded by Mrs. Baillie and her daughters as a mere matter of course and as a means of more firmly cementing family ties. The estate continued in Dr. John Hunter's family till the death of all his lineal descendants, thereafter reverting to Dr. Matthew Baillie's successor.

Dr. Matthew established himself in Great Windmill Street and lost no time in inviting his mother and sisters to make their home with him in London; and in that quiet, somewhat sombre house brightened by domestic pleasures the young doctor built up the practice which had for its culminating point the position of Court physician, varying the arduous monotony of his professional duties by wooing the daughter of a neighbouring doctor—the gentle Sophia Denman who afterwards became his wife. To this lady some of Joanna Baillie's most successful poetic tributes were paid.

In 1790, when Joanna was twenty-nine years old, she published anonymously a volume of miscellaneous poems. The little book did not by any means “set the Thames on fire,” but it attracted the attention of genuine poetry-lovers.

One sultry afternoon, when even summer-time seemed a mixed blessing in the heated London atmosphere, Joanna sat sewing languidly with her mother and sister, longing to be walking along the cool banks of the Calder and longing, too, to find an outlet for her genius.

There had been much ferment of mind regarding this lately, the appreciation given by a few select spirits to her book of poems having inspired her with a burning desire to win recognition in the world of letters. Suddenly, on that sultry day, this ferment of mind fused itself into a definite purpose. The conviction flashed upon her that her power lay—not in lyrical, but—in dramatic composition, and she was swept away on the wings of a resolve to reform the stage. It was a spark of the same sacred fire that had burned in Lady Nairne's heart when she found her mission of refining Scottish song; but while success attended Lady Nairne's anonymous efforts, Joanna Baillie, though achieving fame as a play-writer, found her plan of elevating the stage but a heroic failure.

In the first ardour of her new conviction, Joanna set herself to write a tragedy called "Arnold." That first play does not appear along with her

other dramatic works. Nothing of it but its name is known and, in all probability, the maturer judgment of the authoress consigned it to oblivion.

When Joanna Baillie set herself to reform the stage she little dreamed of the path of thorns she was about to pursue—a path in which she trod unflinchingly and even defiantly to the end of her life; for her theories fell foul of all the accepted dramatic canons, and it was only by sheer force of genius that she won her crown of fame.

Her genius, however, matured very slowly, and it was eight years after her first tentative effort before she published the first volume of her once-famous “Plays of the Passions.” In 1798, when she was in her thirty-seventh year, this volume was published anonymously. The author’s identity remained for a time concealed, many of the critics contending that the plays were written by a man; but in the course of a year, during which the volume was quietly making way, thanks—in great measure—to a critique written by Thomas Campbell the poet, something like a *furore* was created in dramatic circles.

One of the plays—“De Montfort”—was staged;

and a lady, writing to a friend about that time, states that "the author refuses to come forward even to receive emolument, and neither fame nor a thousand pounds seem to have much effect upon the author's mind."

Eventually the truth oozed out, and the astonishment of the public was unbounded when it became known that these plays, powerfully delineating the profoundest passions of life, were written by the reserved and somewhat unapproachable sister of the rising physician, Dr. Matthew Baillie.

In April 1800 "De Montfort" was acted in Drury Lane Theatre with Kemble and Mrs. Siddons in the leading parts; but not even the genius of those celebrated actors could keep the play of the Scottish minister's daughter on the stage longer than eleven nights. "De Montfort," indeed, is a psychological study rather than a play of motive and action, and although everything possible was done to enhance the "stage effect" the audience found in the play the unforgivable element of dullness.

Joanna accepted this result with equanimity though, it transpired, with secret chagrin; but with characteristic tenacity of purpose she pur-

sued her original plan and in 1802 published another volume of "Plays of the Passions."

In July of that year Jeffrey, the trenchant critic of the *Edinburgh Review*, made his famous attack upon her methods and criticised her work with quite uncalled-for rancour though, on the whole, with justice and sense.

Joanna Baillie's views on the subject of the drama are set forth "in battle array" in her able preface to the Plays. She had an exalted moral purpose. She desired by means of the delineation of a single dominant passion, traced in the life of her characters from its source to its inevitable goal, to warn and to save all who were susceptible to the influence of the stage; but she committed the radical error—which proved fatal to the popularity of her plays—of subordinating the interest of the plot to the moral development of the passion portrayed. Her plays were plays "with a purpose," in short, and human nature in search of amusement resents being preached at.

Jeffrey's gall-tipped pen was swift to condemn the theories enunciated in her preface to the Plays. He contended that man was too complex a creature to be swayed so arbitrarily and, so to speak, method-

ically by one supreme passion. He maintained that the highest ground a dramatist could take was the entertainment of his audience, and he sneered at the idea that men would learn to crush passion in their own hearts by witnessing its ruinous effects on the stage. He also held that even if it were legitimate art to write a play on a single passion the limits were cramped and unnatural.

Jeffrey's criticism hurt Joanna Baillie excessively, but she allowed few outward signs of perturbation to appear and quietly continued to write her "Plays of the Passions."

About this time Mrs. Baillie and her daughters settled in Hampstead. Their house was in the vicinity of the Heath which, of course, was quite a rural locality at that time.

Joanna was now a famous woman, and it was no unusual thing for admirers of her genius to find their way to the quiet Hampstead home in the hope of making her acquaintance. Her shyness, however, increased with her years, and she was pronounced "difficult to know." On the other hand, she had a great capacity for making congenial friends. Sir Walter Scott cherished for her a most chivalrous affection; Words-



worth entertained for her a profound respect ; Byron found solace and quietude in her company, and his unhappy wife was the beloved friend of her youth. She enjoyed the friendship of Campbell, the author of the "Pleasures of Hope," and Rogers, the Poet-laureate, delighted to do her homage. Nor did members of her own sex fail in their tribute of friendship. Harriet Martineau knew and loved her, and so did the brilliant yet melancholy Miss Mary Berry, co-heiress of Raith in Fifeshire. That lady, indeed, perhaps understood Joanna Baillie better than any other of her eminent contemporaries did, though she was a popular writer, a great social leader, and the fastidious friend of the superfine Horace Walpole, while Joanna Baillie was a lonely thinker and a most silent and precise spinster to boot.

Among others whom she accounted her friends were Sarah Siddons, Mrs. Barbauld, Maria Edgeworth, Elizabeth Hamilton, and Dr. Channing. Many sidelights on the character of Joanna Baillie are to be found in the biographies of the good and gifted who touched her life at various points.

Sir Walter Scott was the most cherished of all

her friends. It was in the year 1804 that he came to Hampstead with the large-hearted offer of his friendship—the year in which “The Lay of the Last Minstrel” was published and the year, too, in which Joanna Baillie had published a new volume of plays.

Every year, as time went on, cemented more firmly the friendship between those two kindred natures. She witnessed the rising and the bright shining of his star of fame; she was the *confidante* of all his romantic dreams and schemes; she saw Abbotsford arise—the splendid realisation of all his “castles in the air”; she grieved over the downfall of his fortunes, cheered his desperate courage, mourned in poetic numbers his death.

The quiet house at Hampstead Heath must have seemed a veritable “oasis in the desert” to the many thought-worn sons and daughters of genius who sought its simple hospitality. All three inmates of that home were notable women—Agnes having a remarkable store of out-of-the-way knowledge, and being, besides, the very soul of kindness; while the old mother, now alas! becoming blind, possessed a large *repertoire* of Scottish anecdote and was a clever mimic and *raconteuse*.

In the autumn of 1806 Mrs. Baillie died. She had become totally blind and had also suffered from paralysis, and the lengthened period of attendance upon their suffering mother proved very exhausting to her daughters, who were with her by turns day and night.

After her death the sisters felt the necessity of a change of scene before resuming life in Hampstead. They travelled to Scotland, therefore, and renewed old friendships there.

Old friends at Bothwell and at Glasgow were much impressed by Joanna's grave and quiet demeanour and also by the somewhat curious fact that the sisters, after having spent twenty-one years in England, returned to their native country speaking broader Scots than ever!

Some of her old friends, remembering Joanna the romp, the ardent teller-of-tales, the lively woodland companion, were chilled by her still dignity and precision. She was called haughty and cold and she was accused of repelling the advances of some who, proud of their countrywoman's fame, had a desire to become acquainted with her. But Joanna Baillie's great mind had carried her into many a far and silent country since the days when

she was the *Scheherazade* of the school-room ; and it was inevitable that she should have drifted away from the friends of her youth and also that she should be chary of embarrassing what remained to her of life with unprofitable new acquaintances.

But with her few still surviving and truly congenial friends she proved to be essentially the merry, disputatious Joanna of old, and she delighted to join them in those sweet yet sad conversations of reminiscence which have for their burden the magic words, "Do you remember?"

On the conclusion of their visit to Glasgow the sisters made a tour in the West Highlands, which left Joanna deeply impressed with the grandeur of the scenery there.

In the spring of the following year—1808—they were in Edinburgh, the guests of Sir Walter Scott at 39 Castle Street. While they were there, among the many distinguished people who sought the honour of an introduction to the authoress of the "Plays of the Passions" was her redoubtable critic, Lord Jeffrey. But in vain did friends of both strive to bring about reconciliation. Jeffrey was willing enough, differentiating in his philosophic way between the woman of genius and the authoress

of the Plays; she firmly declared, however, that there could be no truce between the editor of the *Edinburgh Review* and herself. His critiques had given her much pain and had placed her works, she averred, at a great disadvantage. She also declared with spirit that, in her opinion, his reviews were written to exalt his own fame and to bring notoriety to his periodical; and she declined the honour of an introduction on the high ground that it might hamper her critic in the free expression of his opinion of her future work.

It is pleasant to know that in later years Joanna shook hands in amity with Lord Jeffrey who, in his more tolerant old age, learned to admire and appreciate the intrepid woman who had never lowered her flag so far as her theories of dramatic art were concerned, and who yet welcomed her quondam antagonist to her Hampstead home, where he found her "as fresh, natural, and amiable as ever, and as little like a tragic muse."

During this visit of the sisters to Scotland, "Marmion" first appeared and Joanna, who gloried in Sir Walter Scott's fame, obtained an early copy of his poem and straightway proceeded to read it aloud for the pleasure of a small com-

pany of friends. Before she was aware she found herself reading a glowing—if too partial—tribute to herself:—

“ Restore the ancient tragic line,  
And emulate the notes that rung  
From the wild harp that silent hung  
By silver Avon’s holy shore,  
Till twice an hundred years rolled o’er,  
When she—the bold Enchantress—came  
With fearless hand and heart on flame,  
From the pale willow snatched the treasure  
And swept it with a kindred measure,  
Till Avon’s swans, while rung the grove  
With *Montfort’s* hate and *Basil’s* love,  
Awakening at the inspired strain  
Deemed their own Shakespeare lived again ! ”

Joanna Baillie had the true Scottish reticence of soul even to excess, and she read these lines unfalteringly with only the deepening tremble of her voice to reveal how tense was her emotion, and it was not until a sensitive listener was betrayed into tears that Joanna well-nigh lost her self-control.

In 1810 her fine play, “ The Family Legend,” was successfully staged in Edinburgh; and in 1812 she published a third volume of “ Plays of the Passions.” Jeffrey lost no time in denouncing the new venture, and Joanna must have had a purely womanly satis-

faction in reflecting that she had refused his proffered friendship when she visited Edinburgh.

In 1815 "The Family Legend" was acted at the New Drury Lane Theatre, London. Sir Walter Scott was in town, basking in the sunshine of fame, and he persuaded Joanna to accompany himself, his wife, and Lord Byron to the theatre to witness the performance of her play. What a splendid trio of celebrities sat that evening in one box! Sir Walter, genial and alert, with no shadow yet upon his great heart; Byron, that "moody lord," voluptuous yet ethereal, with his eyes "in a fine frenzy rolling"; and Joanna Baillie, precise, quiet, and plain, with her tiny figure shrinking in Sir Walter's friendly shadow and only the wonderful eyes shining under grave brows to denote that she, too, was a child of genius.

One tries to divine her feelings as she sat there amid the crowd who did not even know her face. Would there be a sense of desolation mingled with the natural exultation she felt as that unknown crowd applauded her play? How passing strange to her must have been the contrast between the glare and life of the theatre, the stage and actors, the sound of her written words thrilling the atmos-



phere and the quiet room at Hampstead in which she had penned her lonely thoughts during sad night-vigils by her blind and dying mother's bed !

In 1820, when Joanna was fifty-seven years old, her heart once more turned towards Scotland, and the sisters revisited the old familiar places.

While she was in Edinburgh on this latter visit to her own country, her play, "Constantine Palæologus," was acted, and again an Edinburgh audience was roused to enthusiasm, culminating in an ovation so spontaneous and flattering that Joanna must have felt that the hour of her crowning had come and the zenith of her fame been reached at last. It is noteworthy that it was in the fastidious capital of her native land that this illustrious woman, Scot of the Scots as she assuredly was, received this national ovation. But her project of "reforming" the stage remained unfulfilled.

For five years her pen had been laid aside and, as she playfully told Sir Walter Scott, she "had taken to knitting-needles instead." But the year following this visit to Scotland witnessed a brief rekindling of the flame of her genius.

Doubtless she had been stimulated by the elixir of praise so generously accorded her by her countrymen

in Edinburgh, and the success of her sojourn in Scotland had been enhanced by Sir Walter Scott's splendid hospitality at Abbotsford. Amid the classic scenery of the Tweed and with Scott for a host and companion, Joanna Baillie's kindred spirit would become inspired. After her return home she wrote her "Metrical Legends," in one of which the deeds of her ancestor, Wallace, have their arena amid the scenery she had loved as a child, while in another she paraphrases—with scant poetic fire, it must be admitted,—Lady Murray's "Narrative" of her mother, Lady Grisell Baillie, already mentioned in these pages.

In 1823—the year in which her brother, Dr. Matthew Baillie, died—a gleam of sunshine fell on Joanna's increasingly lonely path. Thomson, the friend of Burns, reissued an edition of his famous work, the "Melodies of Scotland," and he inserted some of her best songs.

She continued at intervals even then to write plays, and various spasmodic attempts were made to stage them but always with the same result so far as substantial success was concerned. Joanna in her old age must sometimes sadly have counted the cost of her great gift, and must have acknow-

ledged that the bloom had been taken from the plum of fame because her cherished purpose of reforming the stage had remained unaccomplished.

In 1836, when she was seventy-four, she published a complete edition of her plays, desiring, with characteristic insistence, to present to the public her completed exposition of her theory of the drama; and, by one of "life's little ironies," at the end of her career when she was too weary for more fighting and could only stand silently by her guns, she received from the *Edinburgh Review* a belated laudation.

Jeffrey still maintained that her theory was false to life and art, but he gallantly admitted that his opinion of her purpose had changed, and he avowed that her dramatic powers were superior to those of Byron or Scott.

In 1840 Joanna Baillie published her last book. Curiously enough, her literary career began and ended with a volume of poems. She named this last volume "Fugitive Pieces," in which, along with some songs hitherto unpublished, were incorporated many of the verses printed in her first and anonymous venture.

She died on Sabbath, February 23, 1851, having

entered on her ninetieth year. She was buried in the old churchyard at Hampstead.

In January 1899, a hundred and thirty-six years after her birth and forty-eight years after her death, a magnificent monument to her memory was unveiled at Bothwell.

The monument symbolises with much poetic feeling the great Scotswoman's genius. Upon it are fashioned the images of Music with a harp, of Poetry with a shell and wreath, of Literature with a pen and scroll, of the Drama with a hand holding a mask; and in the ornate panels are placed scenes from the home of her childhood and from her own dramas. The monument is further enriched by a medallion of the head of Joanna Baillie, and it occupies a site on the ground leading to the church in which her father preached — ground which Joanna's heedless feet must often have trodden in her happy youth.

#### SAW YE JOHNNY COMIN'?

“Saw ye Johnny comin’?” quo’ she,

“Saw ye Johnny comin’?”

Wi’ his blue bonnet on his head,

And his doggie runnin’?

Yestreen about the gloamin' time,  
 I chanced to see him comin',  
 Whistling merrily the tune  
 That I am a' day hummin'," quo' she,  
 "I am a' day hummin'."

"Fee him, faither, fee him," quo' she,  
 "Fee him, faither, fee him;  
 A' the wark about the hoose  
 Gangs wi' me when I see him.  
 A' the wark about the hoose,  
 I gang sae lichtly through it,  
 And though ye pay some merks o' gear—  
 Hoot! ye winna rue it," quo' she,  
 "Na, ye winna rue it!"

"What would I dae wi' him, hizzy?  
 What would I dae wi' him?  
 He's ne'er a sark upon his back,  
 And I hae nane to gi'e him."  
 "I ha'e twa sarks into my kist,  
 And ane o' them I'll gi'e him,  
 And for a merk o' mair fee,  
 O dinna stand wi' him," quo' she,  
 "Dinna stand wi' him."

"For weel dae I lo'e him," quo' she,  
 "Weel dae I lo'e him,  
 The brawest lads about the place  
 Are a' but hav'rels to him.  
 O, fee him, faither! Lang, I trow,  
 We've dull and dowie been;  
 He'll haud the plough, thrash i' the barn,  
 And crack wi' me at e'en," quo' she,  
 "And crack wi' me at e'en."

## CHAPTER X

### THE SINGER OF THE SWAN-SONG OF THE SPINDLE-SIDE: JANET HAMILTON

WITH the death of Joanna Baillie the last genuine notes of the reclaimed ancient Scots minstrelsy may be said to have passed into silence so far as the songstresses of the nation are concerned.

The flood-tide of song, which had gathered force with the efforts of the two singers of "The Flowers of the Forest" and had culminated in the splendour of Lady Nairne's contributions, spent itself in Joanna Baillie's vernacular lyrics and receded from the Scottish shores, leaving some strain of the old magic music captive in the shells lying there, till Nature once and again sent a poet wandering that way with heart attuned to divine their whispered music.

And thus our national song grows rarer as time passes on, and with only Janet Hamilton

and a small band of minor singers we approach a period in its history when it becomes evident that the classic "Doric Lay" is doomed to extinction. Even now it is jealously sung and treasured by a dwindling though tenacious minority of Scotsmen who, like the queen in "Hamlet," evince the weakness of their cause by "protesting too much" that the national song can never die. However much we may deplore it, the day is already near the dawning when only the student of literature will be able to understand the racy language of

"The North countrie,  
A nation famed for song."

Scotland is abandoning its once noble vernacular to the coarse usages of the vulgar, and is gradually adopting English manners and customs. Its language is fast becoming *Anglicised*, and this gradual absorption of the nation's individuality will prove a surer instrument of annihilation for Scottish song than did the clumsy pruning-axe of the Reformation which, as we have seen, lopped off the green boughs from the people's tree of song, only to send



greater vigour into the sap hidden in the roots, thus causing the tree to bourgeon forth in due time into a second spring of lyrical life.

Janet Hamilton may be said to have sung the swan-song of the Spindle-side, and she has a claim to a place among the Scottish songstresses because her poetic gift is instinct with the spirit of the older Scottish minstrelsy and because she used the vernacular to express her lyrical feelings.

It is true that her songs, strictly so called, are few in number compared with her ballads and poems of Life and Nature and are indeed "songs unsung," seeing that she did not, like her sister-singers, embalm her effusions in national melodies, and that no one, so far as I know, has felt inspired to wed them to suitable music. They are well worthy of this attention, especially so the beautiful and tender songs—"The Couthie Auld Man" and "The Way of the Warl'."

Undoubtedly, Janet Hamilton's true place in the minstrelsy of her native land is with the balladists rather than the song-writers. She was versed in the ballad-lore of Scotland, thanks to the then prevalent system of peripatetic libraries of rude broadsheet literature and also to an aged

though young-hearted grandmother who, as she  
plied the spinning-wheel,

“ Sang of Gil Morice and young Gregor’s ghost,  
The twa bonnie bairns in the wud that were lost,  
And Bothwell’s fair dochter, the young Leddy Jean,  
That was drowned in the Clyde ae weird Hallowe’en,”

while the girl Janet sat at her feet entranced.

Janet Hamilton’s modern Scots ballads are beyond all praise. To read her “Cousin Bell” is to be song-haunted. Her ballad of “Effie” is by some critics pronounced even finer than Lady Lindsay’s “Auld Robin Gray.” Her exquisite “Ballad of Memorie” with its pathetic reference to her blindness is treasured by all readers of her works, and so also is the reminiscent “Granny’s Tale.” Others there are, too numerous to mention, which are all genuine utterances of the ballad spirit.

Her descriptive poems show a quite unusually minute observation of out-of-the-way phases of Nature; and if at times her rhymes descend to something perilously akin to doggerel there is enough of true music and poetic feeling in them to redeem them.

A few facts regarding the life of this home-spun

poetess will serve to show that she was a remarkable instance of self-taught genius.

Her father, James Thomson, was a humble shoemaker in the moorland clachan of Carshill, situated in the parish of Shotts, Lanarkshire. There Janet was born in October 1795, under the roof of a humble cottage, which she thus describes:—

“ A small thatched cottage, moss-grown, old,  
A low-browed, weather-beaten door,  
Two windows small that dimly light  
The dusky walls and earthen floor.”

Her father was a great reader and was, of course, a keen theologian and politician. His humble neighbours called him “ a brisk, speerity body.” He had a love for Nature which generally reached its recurrent *crises* during the calm and leisure of the Sabbath mornings, when he spent many happy hours listening to the birds and noting the habits of bees and other insects.

Janet’s mother had the blood of martyrs in her veins and her life was ruled by the sterner dogmas of religion. She did not approve of her daughter’s love for ballads and her singing of songs, and she endeavoured to counteract their influence by a re-

ligious home-training on strictly Calvinistic lines and also by the inculcation of "warkly ways," which included a daily task at the spinning-wheel or the tambour-frame.

In spite of various hankerings after a less rigid observance of the Sabbath and more liberty to follow her favourite pastime of roaming on

"The muirlan' brown,  
A warld o' whins and heather,"

Janet appreciated her home-training and proved an obedient daughter.

When she was seven years old her parents removed to the village of Langloan in the parish of Old Monkland.

Langloan was not then the grimy suburb of Coatbridge which it is to-day. When Janet was a girl it was a rural hamlet consisting of two rows of thatched cottages with gorgeous flower-plots in front of the doors where, on rude stone benches, the Radical weavers sat in the summer gloamings discussing the affairs of the State. In her prose essays Janet Hamilton portrays with great fidelity the various characters who dwelt in the roadside village and, in so doing, rescues

from oblivion much that is typical in Scottish peasant life.

She lived in Langloan during the whole of her life, and saw the village gradually lose its pastoral beauty and rise into an important coal and iron centre.

Janet, like all the other singers of the Spindle-side of Scottish Song, was fond of wandering among the moors and woods. Nature, ever careful of her own, took this untutored cottar lass in hand, as she had taken the hoyden child of the Bothwell Manse, and proceeded to educate her in her own unique fashion. It is interesting to reflect that barefoot Janet, wading the shallows of her loved Calder Water and catching minnows in its pools, may have seen a pale, dark, serious lady in mourning garb roaming on the banks of the stream—a lady whose quiet presence had power to silence the careless song on Janet's lips and to cause her to steal into the shadow of the hawthorn bushes with that feeling of awe which was the involuntary tribute, though Janet knew it not, paid by all to Joanna Baillie.

Janet Hamilton does not appear to have attended the village school. Her mother taught her to read

out of the Bible and the Shorter Catechism. Her eighth year marked an epoch in her mental development. She found on the loom of an intellectual weaver a copy of "Paradise Lost" and a volume of Allan Ramsay's poems. How ardently she mastered these treasures has been told by herself in touching language. That was the beginning of her extraordinary love for reading—a passion so intense that not poverty, nor sorrow, nor pain, nor the engrossing cares of motherhood could quench it;—a passion that brought to her the poetic vision and bereft her of the sense of sight.

Her book-hunger being thus early awakened, she proceeded to ransack the village library of which her father was a member. Soon the astonished librarian pronounced her to be "a fell reader," for she exhausted his entire stock, reading with equal ardour "Rollin's Ancient Universal History," "Plutarch's Lives," "Pitscottie's Scotland," "The Spectator," "The Rambler," and the works of Ferguson, Burns, and Macneill.

The next act in Janet's life-drama was even more astonishing than her precocious mental development. She became a wife at fourteen years of age, marrying her father's journeyman,

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John Hamilton, "a very respectable young man," as she naïvely tells, and one who proved to be a worthy husband and companion to his precocious wife. Truth to tell, Janet must have tried her husband's patience in the beginning of their married life. The amusing information is on record that her husband sometimes had to chase her in from "playing at the peeve-*er*all" with other girls on the highway in front of her house-door! But the good man encouraged his young wife's love for books and was, indeed, her devoted slave, tramping the country-side for miles round in search of new libraries for Janet to conquer. One of these village librarians, observing him carrying home load after load of literature, is said to have predicted that Janet would "read herself blind"—a calamity which did, indeed, befall her in her sixtieth year.

It is a mystery how Janet and her husband "kept the wolf from the door" of their humble dwelling, in which ten children were born to them. The struggle with "honest poverty" must have been a heroic task. Yet Janet found—or made—time for reading. She read while others slept, for she neglected no household duty;—read by the



flickering "lowe" of the fire or by the dim light of cheap candles, sometimes with an infant asleep in her lap.

In this manner she studied Shakespeare. She seems to have been attracted to him "as if by a special instinct," to use her own words. But she had to read his works by stealth, for many of her humbler neighbours condemned "play-books" as a snare of the devil. When Janet heard the footfall of an approaching neighbour she hid her "Shakespeare" in a hole in the wall, "to keep people from talking."

Although she composed some poems, chiefly of a religious character, "to please herself," as she quaintly puts it, between her seventeenth and nineteenth years, she did not manifest any further sign of her gift of song until she was about fifty-four; and then this dauntless pioneer of self-culture who had never been taught to write invented for her use the very peculiar characters of which a specimen is given in her collected works.

And now arrived Janet's singing-time. Poem followed poem from her self-taught pen, impelled to write by what her husband has well described as "the burning thochts within that wadna let

her rest." She sang in circumstances and amid surroundings which might well have daunted the Muse. Her lot seemed commonplace, almost sordid. She had been an ignorant cottage-child, a girl-wife, the careful mother of ten children, the frugal housewife eking out her husband's scanty wage by working at tambour-frame and spinning-wheel; and now she was long past the meridian of life, and she dwelt in a village whose once sylvan beauty and quiet had disappeared in squalor, in hideous heaps of slag, in the belching smoke and flame of furnaces, and in the din of vulgar and oft-times vicious humanity—ever brawling, drinking, cursing.

But Janet Hamilton "carried music in her heart" through it all, and sang her sweet and wholesome songs of Nature and used her gift for the benefit of the working-class to which she belonged. In her noble "Song of a Lowly Bard" she announces her desire to help her fellows:—

" Not low my aspiration,  
High and strong my soul's desire,  
To assist my toiling brothers  
Upward, onward to aspire.

Upward to the heaven above us,  
 Onward in the march of mind,  
 Upward to the shrine of freedom,  
 Onward working for our kind."

After blindness came upon her Janet still sang on, and her husband and some of her children gladly took upon themselves the work of *amanuenses*. She was compensated for her darkened vision by the possession of

"That inward eye,  
 Which is the bliss of solitude,"

and her memory was a gallery of minute and beautiful pictures of Nature. In the poems written to her dictation after she was blind, memory plays a large part. Her thoughts went back to scenes of her childhood, and the freedom and the leisure of youth pervade the poems of her old age.

After her arduous struggle with poverty and with her increasing burden of years, Janet Hamilton might well have been excused if she had laid aside her pen and sung no more. It was now "time to be old, to take in sail"; but the brave old woman continued not only to climb the hill of Parnassus but, when she was sixty-eight years

old, she tasted the joys of authorship in the publication of her book of "Poems and Essays."

The volume was published in 1863. It won an instantaneous and enthusiastic recognition from press and public alike, and in a few months a second edition was called for.

The homely poetess of Langloan found herself famous, and details of her life were eagerly sought. The "neighbour Jenny" of her intimates became "the Grand Old Woman" of *Punch*, and many eminent persons hastened to acknowledge a kindred soul—among them John Bright, "the people's tribune."

Janet took the adulation and the curiosity regarding herself very humbly, yet she rejoiced that her work was appreciated and, above all, that she had been enabled to speak helpful words in prose and verse to the people of her heart—the toiling classes.

Though blind for eighteen years before her death, she yet remained vigorous in intellect and progressive in sympathies and was a most delightful conversationalist in the Doric. The people of Langloan became accustomed to direct illustrious visitors to Janet's house.

She died in 1873 at the age of seventy-eight in the month she had often expressed a wish to die in—October, her much-sung, natal month.

She lies in the kirkyard of Old Monkland, and her wish has been respected—

“ No gay garden roses plant ye on my grave,  
A briar from the banks of sweet Calder I crave.”

There was erected in 1880 a memorial drinking-fountain in the High Street of Coatbridge by some who desired to keep the memory of Janet Hamilton green.

#### THE COUTHIE AULD MAN

Wi' a blush and a glint o' true luv frae her e'e,  
Her bonnie white hannie, sae saft and sae wee,  
A' tremblin' she laid in my braid, waukit loof;  
I'm yours, John, for ever—tak' that for the proof.

My heart it gaed duntin' ; oh, funeuch and fain  
Was I when I ca'd the dear lassock my ain ;  
And the saft hand I chirted, and pree'd the wee mou',  
Sae rosy and rich wi' luv's sweet honey-dew.

The auld wife consented, the auld man an' a',  
Tae gi'e me their dochter, and blest was my fa' ;  
Though my luv and their blessing was a' the bride's gear,  
We've wrought weel and thriven this mony a year.

We hae a bit mailin' wi' whilk we can fen',  
 We've sax bonnie bairns grown to women and men.  
 My lassocks are winsome, and warkrife, and douce,  
 And my callans—Gude sain them—are stoops o' the hoose.

And noo the wee hannie is runkled and lean,  
 And dim is the licht in the luve-glinton' een,  
 And the rich, rosy lips now are wallow't and wan,  
 But they're aye just as sweet to the couthie auld man.

. . . . .

And now we bid farewell to the Scottish songstresses; nor is it likely that "we shall look upon their like again," for although there is a group of minor songstresses who might well claim mention here their modern effusions are at the best mere survivals of a departed minstrelsy and "curiosities of literature." Unlike

"The rathe primrose that forsaken dies,"

we treasure them chiefly as memorials of that summer of song which is now "as a tale that is told."

Yet in closing the subject, we do well to recognise the reverberation of the genuine national song-note in Mrs. Craik's fine songs, "Rothesay Bay" and "Strathairly," both fortunate in being wedded to striking music.

Lady Lindsay's "Fishermen of St. Monans" and her "Bonnie Burgh Toon" have also the spirit of the ancient "makkar" in their ring ; and, above all, it is unmistakably visible in the pithy vernacular lyrics of the late Lady John Scott of Spottiswood—in her "Katherine Logie" and "Shame fa' ye Callants," &c.

This lady's method of treating song is, by the way, the latest instance, so far as I am aware, of the once popular practice among the Scottish songstresses of elaborating and—in the process—improving our national songs. To Lady John Scott we are indebted not only for the beautiful melody to which "Annie Laurie" is sung but for the "editing" of the original and the authorship of the third and finest verse of that popular song :—

" Like dew on the gowan lying  
 Is the fa' o' her fairy feet,  
 And like winds in summer sighing  
 Her voice is low and sweet,—  
 Her voice is low and sweet,  
 And she's a' the warl' to me,  
 And for bonnie Annie Laurie  
 I'd lay me doon and dee."

That the perfervid Scottish heart when full still finds its natural expression in song has been quite recently demonstrated by the appearance of several



“Laments” for Scottish heroes fallen in the battlefields of South Africa; and now and again in the “poet’s corner” of Scottish provincial newspapers we hail with spontaneous delight a genuine national song. Also we find the true ore amid much dross in such praiseworthy collections of Scottish verse as Edward’s “Modern Scottish Poets.” Nevertheless, “Ichabod” seems to have been pronounced over Scottish national song.

In following the fortunes of the Scottish songstresses throughout these pages, the reader can hardly fail to have been impressed by the fact that the possession of the song-gift is a thing absolutely independent of the lives, individualities, and even characters of the singers. Lady Grisell Baillie sang the national song in exile; the comely Mrs. Cockburn and the homely Miss Elliot were alike inspired by it; it came to “paint the lily” of Lady Nairne’s spotless reputation and to redeem “gangrel” Jean Glover’s life from utter grossness; it beguiled the *ennui* of Lady Anne Lindsay and it smiled upon the industrious spinning-wheel of Janet Hamilton; Joanna Baillie “forgathered” with it on a lonely moor and Elizabeth Hamilton found it basking in the light of her “ain fireside.”

Like the wind that wanders at will, the spirit of Scottish song visited these favoured Scotswomen and no others of their sex, not because of any deservings of their own, nor yet as compensation or reward, but simply

“By a gift God grants us now and then.”

THE END

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